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# FREE MINDS
# JOHN MORLEY AND HIS FRIENDS

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# FREE MINDS

## JOHN MORLEY AND HIS FRIENDS

By

FRANCES WENTWORTH KNICKERBOCKER

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*For*
*Alfred Lawrence Ripley*
*Book-lover*

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is a portrait of a group of Victorian liberals — Frederic Harrison, Leslie Stephen, and John Morley — and, more particularly, the story of the mind of the central figure during his most creative period. Mrs. Knickerbocker says that she has always believed that we could know the Victorians better if we could bring them out from behind their beards and could see them as the young men they once were. Because of his reticence, Morley has seemed particularly remote, and, despite the many essays and articles on aspects of his activities, his career as an editor and writer still challenges consideration. His work has been neglected partly because so much of it has been absorbed into our thinking. It deserves attention not only because of its quality but also because his ideas are still alive. The temper of these young writers and thinkers was radical, though they fought under different banners from the radicals of today. The liberties for which they struggled are still basic and must be won anew if security and peace are to be gained and maintained.

The author was born in Maine, where she grew up in a Congregational parsonage. More recently she has lived at Sewanee, Tennessee, where her husband was professor of English at the University of the South and editor of the Sewanee Review. Her home is now in Philadelphia, where she is an assistant in the Biddle Law Library of the University of Pennsylvania. She is a scholar and author in her own right, but this is her first book.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# FOREWORD

IT IS HARD for us to understand the Victorians, to see them with the imaginative vision that is so much rarer than research. Because they are so near to us, they seem remote. Because we have so neatly labeled them, we seldom look at them as real people. We hardly remember that they were ever young.

Yet out of the welter of the mid-Victorian years the voices of certain young Liberals still sound clear. From the early lives and writings of John Morley and two of his closest friends, Leslie Stephen and Frederic Harrison, I have tried first to draw a group portrait of these young rationalist Liberals. All three were brought up in middle-class homes, in an economic and moral order shaped by the Industrial Revolution and the Evangelical Revival. The shattering of their heritage of beliefs drove them to remake their own minds and to help open the way for others. To their elders and to most of their contemporaries they seemed heretics: actually they were priests, dedicated to a liberating faith. They tore down cracked and crumbling walls indeed; but through the rubble they were digging down to firm ground. They were trying to lay enduring foundations on which others might build. They were, we see, too rational, too hopeful; but they were never complacent, never blinded by that Victorian illusion, the worship of prosperity and progress. They knew that

the social order must change and reshape its forms; that in their age and every age liberty must be earned and won and shared anew.

In the early work of John Morley, written for the *Fortnightly Review* in the fifteen years of his editorship, this radical way of life is fearlessly explored. These books, the first study of Burke, the first *Critical Miscellanies*, the French Studies, the *On Compromise*, are stamped with a unity of thought, an intensity of conviction. It is, then, with the thinking and writing of the younger Morley that this story of a mind in movement, which is necessarily not a biography, is mainly concerned.

It was not merely as an English Liberal but as a European that John Morley spoke and lived. Alike in his writings and in his public life he expressed the great motive of Western civilization: the freedom and dignity of the individual, the effort toward a better social order and a world order. He kept to the end his vision of "that peace which is the fruit of righteousness." Even today, with all that he lived for in danger, he would still believe that the age-long fight for freedom and justice cannot cease. As a champion of the unfettered mind that resists the uttermost threat of force, John Morley deserves to be remembered.

No one can write of Morley's work without being heavily indebted to Mr. F. W. Hirst's *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*. To the Library Staff of the University of Pennsylvania, the Warden of Ashburne Hall and the Librarian of the Morley Library at the University

of Manchester, I am most grateful for courteous helpfulness. To the late Professor Laura J. Wylie of Vassar College, the late Professor Ashley H. Thorndike of Columbia University, and to my husband I owe more than I can record.

F. W. K.

*February 15, 1943*

# FREE MINDS
# JOHN MORLEY AND HIS FRIENDS

New truths were welcomed in free minds, and free minds make brave men. — JOHN MORLEY

# CHAPTER I

## FREE MINDS IN THE MAKING: THREE YOUNG VICTORIANS

OUT of the blackened midland and northern shires, the grim, ugly towns of industrial England, there came not only her wealth and power and danger but some of her leaders. Such men as Robert Peel, John Bright, Joseph Chamberlain, John Morley, turned the energies that had made their middle-class forebears successful merchants and manufacturers and capitalists to the remaking of the social and political order. Through smoke and squalor they caught a vision of a better way of life for the masses of their countrymen.

In a Lancashire valley, set among the moorland hills, lies the city of Blackburn, the birthplace of John Morley. Its stately parish church and massive public buildings are dark with the smoke of its towering factory chimneys. The finest residence quarter of a century ago is today a region of dingy streets lined with reeking shops and warehouses. Here, marked by its memorial tablet, stands the plain brick house in which, over a hundred years ago, Morley was born. So close were the factories that the boy would wake, as he always remembered, to "the punctual clang of the factory bell in the dark early mornings, with the clatter of the wooden clogs as their wearers hastened

along the stone flags to the mill."[1] But the hand-loom weavers still worked in their cottages on the hill-sides, and just beyond the mills stretched the green open fields.

The very history of Blackburn is the story of the Industrial Revolution. Though the town traces its origin far back to Roman and Saxon times, its modern life began with the use of the new spinning and weaving machinery and of steam-power in cotton manufacture. In 1760 cotton was still carded and spun by hand and woven by hand-looms in the homes of the spinners and weavers. The weaver could stop to dig in his garden; his wife could cook and brew as well as spin or help with the loom; his children could play for a few years in the sun. But by 1838, when Morley was born, the spinner had followed the new machines into the factories; his wife had to leave home to tend the power-looms; his children had to be taken to the mills as soon as they could walk. As the power-looms increased, the hand-loom weavers sank deeper into poverty, until, as one of them said, they were living on their children. In those few years the Lancashire cotton manufacture had become the leading industry of England. It had changed the whole life of the workers, the very look of the landscape. No wonder that Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, who have told the grim story in their fine studies of *The Town Labourer* and *The Skilled*

[1] For Morley's boyhood, see Morley, *Recollections* (New York, 1917), vol. I, chs. i, ii, and F. W. Hirst, *Early Life and Letters of John Morley* (London, 1927), vol. I, chs. i, ii. For details of Morley's later connection with Blackburn, I am indebted to Mr. Lawson Duxbury of Blackburn.

*Labourer*,[2] speak of the atmosphere of tragedy that hung about those bleak hills and blackened villages of Lancashire and the West Riding.

It was a native of Blackburn, James Hargreaves, who about 1765 invented the spinning-jenny that could work first eight, then as many as a hundred spindles by a single wheel. The angry spinners broke into his house, destroyed his jennies, and drove him from his native shire; the mobs in Blackburn and many Lancashire towns broke all the jennies with more than twenty spindles. But neither riots nor petitions could stop the spread of the new machines or the growth of the factories into which poured the new army of workers. In fifty years the population of Blackburn grew from 12,000 in 1801 to 65,000 in 1851.

This sudden upspringing of a great industry and the disruption of the long French war brought outbursts of speculation and disaster. In 1811 Lancashire suffered so that English workers had never known such misery. In 1826, a year of financial panic and bankruptcies, more than half the population of Blackburn were kept from starvation only by provisions bought by public subscription. "The demeanour of the afflicted poor," wrote the Vicar of Blackburn in an appeal in the *Blackburn Mail*, "at this time of unparalleled distress has been such as to recommend them effectually to our respectful consideration, and continued bounty. With very few exceptions

[2] J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *The Town Labourer* (London, 1919), *The Skilled Labourer* (London, 1919).

none of them have transgressed the bounds of propriety, or shown a spirit of insubordination to the laws of their country. To their praise be it spoken, there have been no symptoms of discontent, disaffection, or sedition." But the bounds of propriety could not long hold starving workers. That same month a mob met at the crossroads to Blackburn and three other towns, and by evening not a single power-loom was left standing within six miles of Blackburn.[3]

It was still a hungry and riotous town when, on Christmas Eve, 1838, John Morley was born. That year the harvest had failed, the price of wheat had risen, and the workers of Lancashire could not buy the bread that the Corn Laws kept so dear.[4] The Anti-Corn Law League was just beginning that great campaign which, with the help of the Irish potato famine, repealed the Corn Laws and brought new trade and life to the factory towns. The Chartist movement was voicing the people's deep discontent and trying to make a political revolution with manhood suffrage and the rest of the Six Points. And the hungry hand-loom weavers were fighting the new Poor Law, which threatened to cut off their relief pittances and drive them to the hated workhouse. The year of Morley's birth there was a Chartist torchlight meeting on Blakey Moor; the next year the Chartists marched to the parish church and requested the vicar to preach on the text, "Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are

[3] *The Skilled Labourer*, pp. 126–7.

[4] Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden* (London, 1881), I, 144.

coming upon you." [5] All through Morley's boyhood there were election riots, workers' outbreaks, Anti-Corn-Law and Chartist meetings. Twenty-five years later the editor of the *Blackburn Times* wrote for the *Fortnightly Review* at Morley's request a description of the Blackburn factory-workers of 1843, "miserable objects," men, women, and little children, many deformed and sickly, who toiled from five in the morning to eight at night.[6] The Blackburn of the early forties, with its inhuman working conditions, its appalling illiteracy, its hunger and anger, was, as Morley said, in a state of something very like savagery.

Against this flood of misery and violence that almost overwhelmed the factory towns the only barrier was then what Morley called their "stiffly evangelical" spirit. Long afterward he pictured in his essay on Lancashire what he had seen and known:

"Although the theology of a town like Blackburn is of a narrow, unhistoric, and rancorous kind, yet one must give even this dull and cramped Evangelicalism its due, and admit that the churches and chapels have done a good service through their Sunday Schools and otherwise in impressing a kind of moral organisation on the mass of barbarism which surged chaotically into the factory towns." [7]

What Morley saw in the Blackburn of his boyhood

[5] J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *The Age of the Chartists* (London, 1930), p. 228.

[6] W. Abram, "The Social Conditions and Political Prospects of the Lancashire Workmen," in *Fortnightly Review*, October 1868.

[7] "Lancashire," in *Fortnightly*, July 1878.

was the effect of that mighty religious revival which, as Methodism outside the Church of England and as Evangelicalism within it, was shaping the course of English history. For the preaching of John Wesley and his followers had brought to Cornish miners and Lancashire weavers release from the miseries of this life in a new vision of salvation and hope of a life to come. To their wretched towns, breeding-places of violence and crime, it had brought a decency and discipline that checked the drift to revolt. Indeed it was this power of Evangelical morality, as M. Halévy and others have shown, that saved nineteenth-century England from social revolution.[8] "To you," wrote Dr. Priestley of the Wesleyans, "is the civilisation, the industry and sobriety, of great numbers of the working classes owing."

Like earlier religious movements, the Evangelical Revival was gradually drawn to the support of the existing order. For the piety that helped the poor to bear their lot taught the rich to relieve but not to remake it. Hannah More started Sunday Schools and wrote tracts to teach resignation to the miserable miners and glassworkers. William Wilberforce, that incarnate conscience of England, fought against the Slave Trade abroad and for the factory children at home; yet he helped to pass the Combination Laws which kept the workers unorganized and at the mercy of their employers. Just as the older Puritan Nonconformity had tended to become a creed of getting

[8] Élie Halévy, *A History of the English People in 1815* (New York, 1924), vol. I.

on, a stage in the rise of the successful business man, so Methodism too, as it became less a revival and more a great organization, would come to see wealth as a virtue and poverty as a sin. The Methodist Conference upheld law and order and strongly condemned Chartist and trade-union agitations.

But every great religious awakening quickens in unseen ways the life of its time. Though the direct teaching of Methodism was hostile to working-class movements, yet indirectly it was a training-ground and school for democracy. The Methodist Sunday Schools were the first to teach writing to workers' children; their class meetings and conferences became models for trade-union leaders and political reformers. As Mr. and Mrs. Hammond have said, the new life that Methodism brought to this oppressed society must, in spite of itself, have made many men better citizens and some even better rebels.[9]

For in the years of Morley's boyhood the Victorian warfare against barbarism had begun. They were the years of the Parliamentary Blue Books and Commissions, of Engels' *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, of those Reports on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population and the Health of Towns that at last exposed the filth and disease and horror of the industrial regions; the years of *Past and Present*, of *Sybil* and *Mary Barton* — the great protest in literature against the degradation of human beings into factory hands. Although Chartism itself failed, it was yet, as Mill called it,

[9] *The Town Labourer*, p. 287; *The Age of the Chartists*, ch. xiii.

the victory of the vanquished: its impulse worked on, in movements for trade unions and factory acts, for public health and temperance, for education and the franchise — reforms that gradually lifted the factory towns out of their misery and savagery. With the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the Factory Act of 1847 came the turning-point of the age. The class war between the "Two Nations" of rich and poor, capitalists and workers, that had threatened the England of the thirties, was averted by a great humanizing movement which gave to the workers some share in the larger life they were creating.

With Repeal and the opening of the railway to Preston in 1846 there began for Blackburn the years of prosperity, the huge export of cotton cloth to India that made it before 1914 the greatest weaving city in the world. Its fortunes fell with the post-war depression and the Indian boycott of Lancashire cloth. Once more its quiet streets and closed factories and the thin faces of its people told their story of unemployment and endurance. But even in the worst of recent years it was a very different city from the one in which Morley was born.

"The sight of broken heads does not frighten me," Morley once said. "I was brought up in a surgeon's office." What the boy saw and heard in his father's office and on the streets, the harsh rhythm of the factory, the iron regularity of machine-driven hours, sank deep into his sensitive mind and made him in his early life a fighting radical. The "independent, shrewd, quick, keen-bitten" Lancastrian temper that he long afterward described stamped

itself on the sturdy, fiery stuff of his own family heritage. His father, Dr. Jonathan Morley, was a Yorkshireman from the West Riding; his mother, Priscilla Donkin, was a Northumbrian. The Morleys, Mr. Hirst tells us, were cotton "manufacturers," supplying the cotton to the hand-loom weavers and selling the finished cloth; the Donkins were shipowners. Both families were devout Wesleyans, and Morley's mother remained so all her days. His father, after settling in Blackburn, turned to the Established Church; but, said his son, "he was negligent of its ordinances, critical of the local clergy, and impatient as if of some personal affront of either Puseyites on the one hand, or German infidels on the other." Like a true Englishman he took his religion independently, tempering orthodoxy with the keen delight in literature that he shared with his second son. There is no finer portrait of a Victorian father than this of the *Recollections:*

"A man of strong character, he was exacting, though capable of delightful geniality, a moderate lover of his profession, a born lover of books. He taught himself a working knowledge of Latin and French, and I long possessed the pocket Virgil, Racine, Byron, that he used to carry with him as he walked to the houses of hand-loom weavers on the hillsides round."

"The Victorian family," said A. C. Bradley, "is the greatest imaginative creation of Georgian literature." It is indeed — although the Georgians were mostly following after that notable Victorian, Samuel Butler, and *The Way of All Flesh* was a terribly truthful family portrait. But

of course there was no typical "Victorian family": the large, devout, and happy families of Charlotte M. Yonge's novels, and the large, devout, and happy families of Gladstones and Lyttletons who devoured those novels were just as Victorian as the Pontifexes. The rigid Sabbath-keeping of Morley's home was not just Victorian but evangelical: the spirit of Ruskin's mother hanging black veils over her son's beloved Turners on Sundays. Young John Morley knew strict discipline, but he had playmates, especially his beloved younger sister Grace. And he had books — later he even had them sent from that great Victorian institution, Mudie's Select Library. Perhaps it was the books that brought him, as he grew older, closer to his father. His first adventure was his railway journey, when he was twelve, to Manchester with his father to see Queen Victoria and the Duke of Wellington.

From the old Queen Elizabeth Grammar School close by his home where little John Morley learned his letters he went on to the Academy of William Hoole, a leading citizen of Blackburn, a Liberal and an Independent (Congregationalist). John was remembered, Mr. Hirst says, as a quiet, studious boy who used to walk about the playground reading while his schoolmates played games. In spite of this strange behavior he must have been well liked, for when Hoole was elected Mayor of the town the boys chose Morley as mayor of the school — whereupon he made them a speech in Greek. "John Morley," said Hoole, "was the best English scholar I ever had in my school." Twice on Sunday the boys had to go to the

Independent chapel; every day they had to learn five or six verses of the Bible until they could repeat whole epistles. Out of that inexorable, incomparable training came Morley's essays and speeches, steeped in the rhythms of the King James Bible. And the school kept its hold on him long after he had broken from the letter of its teachings; its spirit sent him, side by side with Nonconformist leaders, into the battle for "Free Church and Free Schools."

It was a great adventure for a Lancashire boy of fourteen to go to school in London. "I am going to the City," he said bravely, "and I hope I shall do well." He knew that his father was making real sacrifices to give him the chance to win a university scholarship. The school they had chosen, University College School, had been started to prepare students for the new London University, the first English university open on equal terms to Nonconformists and Churchmen; Morley entered just after his future comrade Joseph Chamberlain had left. Three years later he went from University College School to Cheltenham College, another of the new public schools for middle-class boys. Under its severe classical training he worked, so he said, without any marked distinction. But he did win first prizes in history, and when he tried a prize poem on Cassandra, the Principal commented that he might some day be able to write very fair *prose*.

Although Morley seldom returned to Blackburn in after years, he has not been forgotten there. It was there that he made his first attempt to enter Parliament, when in

1869 he stood as Liberal candidate at a bye-election, and came out at the bottom of the poll. After he entered Parliament several of his finest speeches were made in his old home. Although he was held up to scorn by a local paper for the outspoken heresies of his *Voltaire*, yet in his last years he was not without honor in his own country. In 1912 he received the honorary freedom of the borough, and his portrait hangs on the wall of the present Grammar School. The tablet that marks his birthplace was put there by a band of young Liberals who had formed a group to carry on his influence. And some of them still hold him in devoted remembrance.

There is a crayon drawing of Morley done in 1881, two years before he entered Parliament. The face, clean shaven except for the inevitable sideburns, is strongly modelled: high forehead, long, aquiline nose, sharply cut lips, firm chin, clear, steady eyes. It is the face of a thinker, an idealist; but there is plenty of firmness, even passion, about the mouth and chin and the lift of the head. That discerning French critic, M. Filon, describing Morley after a single visit, caught this twofold quality: the calm, searching eyes, the "expression of combat." [10]

It is told of Morley that when he was only a little boy he was asked what he intended to be. "A great man," he answered. It was that steadfast ambition, his Lancashire grit and pluck, his eager mind and strong convictions, that sent him so far in journalism and literature and politics. It was not, indeed, given to him to reach his

[10] Augustin Filon, *Profils Anglais* (Paris, 1883).

uttermost ambition in public life; he had not the height and presence, the quickness in debate, the toughness and resiliency of mind and temper. But as M. Filon wrote prophetically, "If he does not become a great leader, he will remain a grand moral force."

II

Of Morley's friend Leslie Stephen there is a happy sketch. "I like him because he's always the same, and you're not positive about some people": that was Crossjay Patterne's way of describing Vernon Whitford, the "lean long-walker" of *The Egoist*, to whom Meredith gave so much of Stephen's form and spirit. Always-the-sameness was the mark of the man and of everything he did and wrote. If ever a man was all of a piece, it was Stephen: tall and thin and red-haired, with deep-set bright blue eyes, low voice, keen, lucid mind, lean, terse style — body and spirit, a great athlete.

Not that this steadfastness was either simple or easily won. Of his deepest experiences he would not speak. But the veil of his own reticence and humility was lifted a little when he wrote the life of his brother Fitzjames. From that, and from the journals of his parents quoted by his biographer, one can piece together the story of a heritage and a family life as rich and various as any in Victorian annals.[11]

Those Scottish ancestors of Stephen's were an adventurous lot. There was that son of an Aberdeenshire farmer

[11] Leslie Stephen, *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen* (London,

and smuggler, his great-grandfather James Stephen, who was shipwrecked, married his rescuer's daughter, was imprisoned for debt, stirred his fellow prisoners to break out in protest, studied law but was rejected by the Middle Temple benchers for "want of birth, want of fortune, want of education, and want of temper." His son James, Leslie's grandfather, was also involved in poverty and love affairs, but rose to be member of Parliament and Master in Chancery. In the West Indies, he saw for himself the cruelties and evils of slavery; on his return he became the brother-in-law and strong supporter of Wilberforce. A high-minded Evangelical fanatic, a mighty fighter against the slave trade, he was also a mighty walker: on his seventieth birthday he walked twenty-five miles to breakfast, then to his office in London, and back to his home at night. As for James Stephen, fourth and most eminent of that name, the father of Fitzjames and Leslie, he proceeded from Trinity Hall, Cambridge, to the bar at Lincoln's Inn and then to the Colonial Office as Counsel. Crabb Robinson, meeting him in 1811, described him as "a pious sentimentalist and moralist." Indeed his main motive in choosing a career was his desire to influence the Government on the slavery issue; he had his wish when in 1824 in one day and at one sitting he drew up the Slave Trade Act and in 1833 the Act for the Abolition of Slavery. As Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, "King Stephen" practically ruled the colonial

1895), pp. 1–74; Frederic William Maitland, *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (New York, 1906), pp. 1–34.

empire. His incredible feats of mastering intricate problems and drafting codes and despatches were relieved by such recreation as writing for the *Edinburgh Review* his *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*. He was austere, strong-willed, deeply religious, yet sensitive and shy — born, said his wife, without a skin. They were a strenuous race, these Stephens, hot-tempered, greedy for work, devoted to some cause or crusade.

The other strain of Stephen's heritage was just as remarkable. His mother, Jane Catherine Venn, came of a long line of clergymen. Her father, the Reverend John Venn, became the rector of that famous group of philanthropists living at Clapham Common near London: William Wilberforce, champion of slaves and pauper children; Zachary Macaulay, editor of the *Christian Observer* and father of a yet greater son; Henry Thornton, wealthy banker; James Stephen — that "party of the Saints" pleasantly dubbed by Sidney Smith the Clapham Sect. Their moderate, practical Calvinism made it easy for them to work with all kinds of Nonconformists, even with rationalists and freethinkers, for their great ends of moral and social reform. In Catherine Venn strong common sense mingled with love of poetry: "the healthiest and happiest nature I have ever known," said her son. Deep as was her own religious feeling, she could understand and accept Leslie's unorthodox ways. From every word he wrote of her there shines her beauty of look and spirit, her "singular serenity." "How can one grieve very bitterly," he wrote to Morley near the end of her life, "at a

noble life going out like a solemn piece of music? The harmony is so perfect that grief seems to be a kind of discord."

"Our household," Leslie Stephen explained, "was stamped with the true evangelical characteristics — and yet with a difference." Different indeed from Calvinism at its uttermost — from little Edmund Gosse, who had never heard a story, reading aloud Jukes on Prophecy to his Plymouth Brethren parents. In the Stephen family the line between saints and sinners, the church and the world, was not deeply drawn; for no one with "King Stephen's" position or powers could have shut out the world or the sinners. He knew nearly everyone who was anyone in the world of politics and of letters: Sir Henry Taylor, Aubrey de Vere, and Nassau Senior were his close friends; he dined with Mill, Macaulay, John Austin, Monckton Milnes, Charles Greville.

Into this exciting family came, on November 28, 1832, a third son, Leslie. His older brother Herbert, who died at twenty-four, was then ten; Fitzjames was three; it was his sister, two years younger, who became his intimate. The Stephens were living in Kensington, where most of Leslie's life was spent. He bowled his hoop in Kensington Gardens, and there he took his last walks. Through his mother's journals one can watch the lively little boy. At two he is already "a most independent-spirited little fellow, very bold and very persevering. He climbs up chairs and sofas and seems to have no fear at all . . ." (any more than later on, when he climbed the Schreck-

horn and the Jungfrau). An impetuous temper is coming out: "He is very turbulent and self-willed and rather passionate, but in a moment changes to kindness and affection. . . . A word or even a look of blame puts him into an agony of distress." At five, "he cannot endure to hear of any suffering or sorrow or any naughtiness." He could not bear to look at a picture of the Crucifixion (as he could never bear to read the casualty lists in war times). Two other lifelong traits already stood out: "the feeling of being loved seems to give him peculiar pleasure," and he insisted on giving the answers to Watts's Catechism in his *own* words.

In that devout and even saintly household piety was never gloomy. Though the family never went to plays or balls, they did not condemn those who did. "We certainly had a full allowance of sermons and Church services; but we never, I think, felt them to be forced upon us. They were a part, and not an unwelcome part, of the order of nature." James Stephen's refusal to force religion upon his children made him almost unique among evangelical parents. "I have never passed a day," he wrote in his journal, "without praying for the spiritual weal of my children . . . and if we err on the side of not pressing them to religious demonstrations, developments, or early sensibility, may God forgive us! . . . My daily and nightly terror is that they should be 'patent Christians' — formalists, praters, cheats, without meaning or even knowing it." Surely Leslie Stephen, freethinker and plain-speaker, was no prater and no cheat.

Indeed it was not Watts's Catechism but Scott's poetry that filled little Stephen's mind. His mother pictures him reciting aloud "The Lady of the Lake" as he drives out with her, so utterly absorbed that he sees and hears nothing. Concerned over the pale, excitable eight-year-old boy, she consulted a doctor, who told her, as Leslie put it, that "I was in a fair way to become feeble in mind and deformed in body. . . . He added that even my life was at stake." Leslie, he ordered, must be sent to school, away from his too-stimulating home; he must have fresh air, dull lessons — and no more poetry.

Whether or not this prescription stifled Leslie's imagination, at any rate it saved his life. (He used to say that he could not be a poet because he could never write verse — he lived too soon to discover that this was no drawback.) His devoted father at once moved his family to Brighton and put Leslie into the Reverend Mr. Guest's school, where Fitzjames already was a pupil. The latter afterward described the school as too decorous, with not enough fighting and bullying and too much evangelical theology. "The boys used to be questioned at prayers, 'Gurney, what's the difference between justification and sanctification?' 'Stephen, prove the omnipotence of God.' " But Leslie, who did not need the bullying, seems to have escaped the theology. At least he grew strong, and enjoyed the playground and even, apparently, the dull lessons. "Mr. Guest said that he had never taught so quick a boy." The next year the family moved to Windsor so that the boys could live at home and go to Eton. Fitz-

james the stalwart now got plenty of the bullying meted out to "uptown" boys; but he knew how to defend himself and to protect his less robust brother, and Leslie afterward could not remember enduring any particular tyranny. His days at Eton were suddenly ended when his father received a note from one of the masters, praising Leslie for his conduct and diligence but speaking strongly of "his want of success in composition and his not having the power of perceiving beauty." If this was the effect of five years of making Latin verses, his father decided that he had better stop. But in those school years Leslie had learned far more important lessons than Latin verse-making. He was mastering, moulding into steadfastness, his Stephen and Venn heritage: high temper and sensitive nerves, keen mind and common sense, strength and sweetness.

One great Victorian put Leslie Stephen into a novel; another described him in a memorable image. Thomas Hardy, travelling in the Bernese Oberland, saw from afar the formidable peak of the Great Schreckhorn, which Stephen had been the first to conquer. "Then and there I suddenly had a vivid sense of him, as if his personality informed the mountain — gaunt and difficult, like himself." [12]

III

As the third of these friends, Frederic Harrison, once observed, there is no typical Victorian. If there were,

[12] From *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, by Frederic William Maitland, p. 277, courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

he himself, in the variety of his interests, the fervor of his crusades, might sit for the portrait. His life of ninety-two years, ten years longer than that of the great Queen, spanned the whole Victorian age and reached into our between-war time.

Although Harrison was born in the riotous year 1831, and his boyhood covered the turbulent years from the First Reform Bill through Corn Law Repeal and Chartist agitation, his own surroundings were utterly peaceful. He grew up in what was then a lovely country village, now swallowed up by the suburbs of London. "My memory as a child," he wrote in nostalgic, not to say sentimental mood, "is fragrant with the quiet, sleepy strolls of babies and nurses . . . through flowery meadows and shady copses. . . . We would wander there all day and meet no one but a carter or a milkmaid." Other early memories were less idyllic: the London of the cesspools and gibbets from which the skeletons of pirates hung along the Thames. He remembered the drive to Brighton by stage-coach before the railway was built, and the wild excitement of his first journey by rail. He describes in vivid detail his impressions, at six and a half, of the coronation of Queen Victoria: the vast crowds, the martial music, the splendid soldiers and horses, the glorious and gigantic life-guardsman who actually spoke to him.[13]

"We were a middle-class business lot," he wrote of his family. His father came of Leicestershire yeomen farmers,

[13] Frederic Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs* (London, 1911), vol. I, chs. i–iii.

"a sturdy energetic race, of strong Biblical spirit and hard nature." He was a trained architect, like his own father and brother, but became a partner in a stockbrokers' firm. Frederic's mother was of Scotch-Irish descent. Conservative though they were, the Harrisons were not Philistines. The father's two passions were gardening and art. Without benefit of Ruskin, he was a keen defender of Turner, and the Royal Academy Show was little Frederic's reward for going to the dentist. Frederick senior was devoted to the drama, too, and his son never forgot his reading aloud of Shakespeare. The mother was a fine singer, and had, for those days, a remarkable education; she taught her boys history, Latin, and French. Both parents were devout Christians, the father with a leaning toward High Church and "an active dislike of Popery, Puseyism, and Dissent." As with the Stephens, there was no enforced piety; family prayers were a natural part of family life. Little Frederic prayed constantly for everything from a prize in examinations to a score in cricket — an innocent habit that in his Positivist maturity he sternly condemned as evil and degrading. Evidently it was taken for granted that so brilliant a boy would some day take Orders.

As enthusiastic believers in the moral and religious ideas expounded in Isaac Taylor's *Home Education*, the Harrisons set themselves to practise on their sons. But Isaac Taylor's was a dull regime. Frederic never sang a nursery rhyme or read a fairy tale, never met Cinderella or *The Arabian Nights*, till he had children of his own. Not that

his childhood was as drab as Edmund Gosse's. He did have *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Macaulay's *Lays*; at twelve he was mastering Greek and reading Homer for pleasure. But without the joy of make-believe it was not strange that he grew up stunted in imagination, in sense of wonder — and in sense of humor. And even a naturally cheerful, healthy boy brought up by devoted parents who lived wholly for their children may sometimes be unhappy. In the most unvictorianly self-revealing passage he ever wrote, Frederic recalls "hours, days, weeks of acute pain and utter despair." The sharpest torments of his life were caused by the pious nurse who told him that he had committed the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost because in a passion he uttered the word "damn" (but hers was the unforgivable sin). Much of his childish suffering was due to his quick, sensitive Irish temper; much, later on, to the big boys at Kings College School, where, because he was so precocious and well trained, he was put in a form with older boys who enraged him by petting him and calling him "Fan." And then there were those exhaustions and depressions, the moods of adolescence not mentioned in Isaac Taylor. "I suffered horribly," Harrison remembers, "and my suffering was invariably increased by the curious insensibility of all about me or their clumsy efforts to relieve me." He adds — how humanly — "I have never been able to perceive that my own boys suffer in this way; but I am sure that many children do."

Thus, beneath the surface of a nature that seemed so

normal, there worked conflicts analyzed in Austin Harrison's penetrating study of his father.[14] Creative by temperament, moralist by condition and conviction, young Frederic was torn this way and that; his immense physical energies were thwarted by years of spiritual wrestlings. He came through triumphant, thanks to his superb vitality, his essential sanity, and his utterly happy marriage with the young cousin whose mind he moulded to complete sympathy. But the struggle left its marks — the irritability, the sudden spates of temper that startled porters and fellow travellers and delighted small sons. For the big, fierce-whiskered man, with the massive head, very black hair brushed back above a broad, square, red face, brilliant dark eyes, loud voice and abrupt ways, hid behind that formidable mask a lifelong shyness that he could repress but not resolve. Even the Positivism in which at last he found his answer and his cause was itself a source of continual friction, for it was a faith that other people refused to take seriously. To be a Positivist was to be everlastingly on the defensive, on the wrong side not only of religion but even of irreligion. Harrison spent his life charging "like a man in a rage," says his son, at every kind of opponent and oppressor. He paid the price of his crusading: he gave up not merely worldly success but the chance of achievement in law, politics, or letters; he cut himself off from the freedom of art, the fulness of life. But toward the end of his life, at the close of his *Memoirs*, he wrote: "The urgent task of our time is to

[14] Austin Harrison, *Frederic Harrison* (New York, 1927).

recover a religious faith as a basis of life both personal and social. I feel that I have done this . . . for myself, and am closing my quiet life in resignation, peace, and hope."

Although to Stephen and Morley that task seemed far longer than it did to Harrison, they shared his sense of its urgency. For all three had come from homes filled with the evangelical spirit. All three met in their university years an experience that changed their thinking and their ways of life. And all three drew from their heritage a vigor, a courage, a vision of righteousness, by which in reshaping their own lives they helped to clear new paths for thought.

# CHAPTER II

## PASTURES NEW

I LOVE the sleepy river — 'canal' or even ditch as scoffers may call it — which glides past the old college gardens. . . . Not even the Alpine scenery is dearer to me." So, when he was already under sentence of death, Leslie Stephen wrote of Cambridge in *Some Early Impressions*.[1] His first delightful *Sketches from Cambridge by a Don*,[2] recently reprinted as a record too precious to be lost, were done by the "pert young journalist" (his own words) in 1865 when he had but just left the university. In these and in his lives of his brother Fitzjames and of Henry Fawcett, he drew, so his biographer thinks, the best portraits of Cambridge that have ever been drawn, full of her keen east winds, of piercing scrutiny, swift humor — and deep affection. "No more steadfast lover has Cambridge ever had." [3]

The Cambridge and Oxford of the early eighteen-fifties were, as Stephen and Harrison described them, Anglican seminaries for the governing classes, bulwarks of the conservative establishment, "mediaeval in their constitution and altogether behind the age in their teaching." Indeed they were not so much universities as groups of inde-

[1] Leslie Stephen, *Some Early Impressions* (London, 1924), p. 11.
[2] *Sketches from Cambridge by a Don* (London, 1932).
[3] Maitland, p. 42.

pendent, competitive colleges, each with its own statutes and traditions. Dons and tutors were distinguished chiefly by a good, safe orthodoxy. "Our plan," wrote the young don in 1865, "is not to teach anyone anything, but to offer heavy prizes for competition." To be sure, this was a slight exaggeration: the honours examinations had set high standards in classics and mathematics; one could not be an Oxford "first" or a Cambridge wrangler without scholarship that was thorough, even if narrow. But passmen could still be intensely and incredibly ignorant. And one college Fellow whom Stephen remembered, tired of waiting for the death of the cynical old incumbent of a desirable living, took to drink and made a terrific scandal by bringing into hall a disreputable person who arose and proposed the health of John Bright — "in those days he might as well have proposed Beelzebub." Of course the Fellow was asked to leave Cambridge, and soon afterward fell into a canal after dinner and was drowned.[4]

"A very pleasant though not a very cheap hotel," was Sir James Stephen's description of Trinity Hall in his own day; for all he learned there he might as well have stayed at a London hotel. But things were better when in 1850 Leslie, following Fitzjames, began there the college career that was to last fourteen pleasant years. He worked hard, made Liberal speeches at the Union, and read widely in literature and philosophy: "Happily for us," he remarked later, "the doctrine that the English language and literature should be made part of our edu-

[4] *Some Early Impressions*, pp. 21–2.

cation had not yet been proclaimed. We read what we liked and because we liked it." He ended twentieth wrangler in the mathematical tripos — which, being interpreted, means first class in the final examinations. Better still, he won his health: he became a long-distance runner, winning the mile and the two-mile races; a mighty walker, who once on a hot day did the fifty miles from Cambridge to London in twelve hours; a "fanatical oarsman." For ten years he rowed in the college races, though he was better at coaching than at the oar. A comrade never forgot Leslie's joy when his college first went head of the river in 1859. His satiric sketch of "The Rowing-Man": "excellent raw material for country parsons or any other profession where much thinking power is not required," hardly conceals his own delight. And when he writes, "Though Mr. Arnold sneers at us for calling ourselves 'the best breed in the universe,' I don't think there are many better," the typical mild statement is more eloquent than eulogies.

From college friends and pupils Professor Maitland has gathered vivid glimpses of this "tall, gaunt, and shy man, who read mathematics and hovered on the edge of a conversation." No don was ever more beloved by undergraduates. As young as many of his pupils, he won them by his enthusiasm for their sports, his humorous proddings of their laziness, his stimulating talk and quiet kindnesses. His was "a grand life of doing good to men. . . . Pretty nearly any of us in those days would have done anything for Stephen."

But there was one price too high for him to pay for a pleasant life. The fellowship to which he was appointed after taking his degree in 1854 was not one of the ordinary lay fellowships but one for which he was bound to take Holy Orders. Rashly, as he afterward said, but not insincerely, he accepted the condition, was ordained deacon in 1855 and priest in 1859, and meantime became a college tutor. His reasons were of the finest: he wanted to please his father, who had set his heart on one of his sons' becoming a clergyman; he wanted to relieve his father of the burden of supporting him; he knew he could be a good tutor. And so until 1862 he went on reading the lessons in the college chapel, now and then preaching there and in the town. He had taken for granted the orthodox beliefs in which he had been bred. But all the time he was reading Hume and Kant, Buckle and Spencer, Comte and Mill. Here is his own account of the change: "I became convinced, among other things, that Noah's flood was a fiction (or rather, convinced that I had never believed in it) and that it was wrong for me to read the story as if it were a sacred truth. . . . Upon my stating in the summer of 1862 that I could no longer take part in the chapel services, I resigned my tutorship at the request of the Master. The College, however, allowed me to retain my fellowship and hold some minor offices." [5] So Leslie Stephen, who "loved Cambridge well, but honesty better," became one of our liberators.

Of course it was not as simple as that sounds. In after

[5] Maitland, p. 139.

years Stephen could not recall any suffering in the abandonment of his old faith. "It was not so much a process of giving up beliefs as of discovering that I had never really believed." But he could not have passed quite so easily through his valley of decision. As his doubts grew, his position as tutor and clergyman became more difficult. A friend who knew him then has told of his mental torture, the pain of a sensitive nature when he must hurt those he loves best. Mercifully, the crisis came after his father's death, and his mother never failed in sympathy. But now and then a touch on the old scar, a reproach by a friend for the vehemence of his plain-speaking, would make him cry out that they never knew what it was to be throttled by a white choker. Yet when the bonds were loosed and the dear Cambridge days left behind there came only relief, and at length peace. His courage, by hastening the abolition of religious tests, had opened wider the gates of the universities.

## II

"Our prevailing tone is a quiet good sense," wrote Leslie Stephen in 1865, anticipating Lytton Strachey's famous description of those Cambridge cloisters consecrated to poetry and common sense.[6] In this respect, Stephen went on, "we differ strangely from Oxford. . . . They have theological controversies and care which gets the best of them. . . . The model Oxford reformer is of a breed comparatively rare among us. . . . We have the

[6] Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York, p. 17).

strongest objection to looking far beyond our noses . . . whereas the Oxford man is rarely content without a touch of more or less refined philosophy." [7] And in his last reminiscences Stephen added gaily that it was one of the great advantages of Cambridge that there was no such person there as Newman or Dr. Arnold — no spiritual guide to infect his pupils with excess of moral earnestness. "Our prosaic Cambridge spirit was free from that evil." Cambridge men, he once said, "did not deny the existence of the soul, but they knew that it should be kept in its proper place." Stephen's own examples of the Cambridge and Oxford types of mind were Macaulay and Gladstone; he would probably have admitted that he and Morley were just as characteristic if not as eminent specimens.

The Oxford to which in 1849 Frederic Harrison went up as a Scholar of Wadham College was, as he said, a quiet market town, still unscathed by factory smoke and modern ideas. Although the day was past when Jeffrey could say, "Except praying and drinking, I see nothing else that it is possible to acquire in this place," its official teaching was almost limited to classics, philosophy, and mathematics. No student could matriculate without signing the Thirty-nine Articles. Actually, however, the University was recovering from the shattering collapse of the Oxford Movement. Mark Pattison in his *Memoirs* describes the change that followed the withdrawal of Newman: "Theology was banished from the Common Room,

[7] *Sketches from Cambridge*, p. 93 ff.

and even from private conversation. Very free opinions on all subjects were rife." For Oxford was on the verge of reform; the long-withstood Commission for the Investigation of Oxford was appointed the year after Harrison entered.

But to the eager, brilliant lad of eighteen, fresh from London, Oxford was at first utterly depressing.[8] The undergraduates, mostly from boarding-schools and country parsonages, were raw, ignorant boys, "without interest in art or knowledge of the world." The system seemed very wooden, the lectures mostly bores, the Warden and tutors dull pedants. The one exception was Richard Congreve, one of the most successful and popular dons of his time, and for five years the strongest influence on young Harrison's mind. He never spoke of Comte, but by his scientific approach to history he was preparing more than one of his students for Positivist teachings. Of the four young men, Harrison, E. S. Beesly, J. H. Bridges, G. E. Thorley, who later formed the group nicknamed Mumbo-Jumbo "for the discussion of all social, political, and religious questions" — a modest aim — three afterward became pillars of the Positivist faith. At Oxford the four would breakfast together on Sunday mornings on cold duck, attend the St. Mary's sermon, and discuss it on long country walks and afterward till two or three in the morning. Indeed, theology was, Harrison said, the principal thing he studied: a spacious theology, for he read "Dante, F. D. Maurice, John Henry Newman, C. Kings-

[8] *Autobiographic Memoirs,* vol. I, ch. iv.

ley, J. S. Mill, Carlyle, A. Comte — Plato, Aristotle, and the Bible — with almost equal interest and profit."

It was in these long meditations and discussions that the unthinking orthodoxy of Harrison's boyhood slowly melted away. Although like Stephen he could recall no agonies of doubt when, nearly sixty years later, he wrote his memoirs, yet he quotes a letter written at twenty-one to his mother, a solemn Sunday-night outpouring, "the diary of a sucking missionary" he calls it, telling of his deep distress at the freethinking of his friends. A year later, in 1853, after taking his examinations for the degree, first in the Classical Honours and then in the new History School, he wrote his father that his refusal to take Orders was due to want of enthusiasm for the Church and not to any repugnance to its teaching. But only a few years afterward he was writing his mother from London an indignant protest against the failures of the Church, the worldliness of the clergy, their neglect of the workers and of the city poor. Of course his mother was shocked by his strong language, and so affectionate a son would suffer in giving her pain. But his disappointed parents were utterly generous. When Frederic, after winning a first in Classics, insisted on staying another two years at Oxford, his father swallowed his disapproval. As a keen business man, he naturally thought it was high time for his son to begin his career; he could not understand so strange a lack of worldly ambition, the refusal to compete for prize or place which became a life-long obsession. But since Frederic was then twenty-four and had, as he put it, "ample means

of livelihood," he also had his way. He stayed on as tutor until the end of 1855 and then went to London to read law at Lincoln's Inn with a fixed determination *not* to give his life to his profession.

For Harrison had found his cause. That year 1855 was for him the turning-point. Leaving Oxford "a Republican, a democrat, and a free-thinker," he went to Paris, as Congreve had done, to interview Auguste Comte. The philosopher received him courteously, asked what points he wanted to have explained, and talked on for some hours, "with extreme volubility, precision and brilliance." Those hours were the decisive hours of Harrison's life. "He became a Positivist," says his son acutely, "because he was always a Positivist." A man so impatient of dogma yet so keen for systematic thought, so stunted in imagination, so hungry for belief, found here all he sought and needed: a religion without theology, a religion of Duty. For Harrison, who would not have a career, had to have a mission. "My business," he summed it up, "is to teach, to moralise, to reform." It was, and he did.

### III

By 1856 even Oxford was making room for the middle classes. Following the remarkable report of the Commission, the Reform Acts of 1854 and 1856 abolished religious tests for admission and for the A.B. degree, removed century-old restrictions on endowments and awards, and drew up a constitution for the university. It was in the first election under the new statutes opening the scholarships

of Lincoln College to free competition that John Morley won his scholarship.

But in spite of this hopeful beginning, a double disappointment shadowed his university life. For Lincoln was just then, as he said, "in a state of sad intellectual dilapidation." A shameful common-room intrigue had elected an almost illiterate and boorish Rector and had banished Mark Pattison, its greatest scholar, whose influence would have made all the difference to an eager student.[9] An even deeper misfortune, of which Morley's *Recollections* characteristically say not a word, was described to Mr. Hirst after Morley's death by his devoted sister.[10] A quarrel between the hot-tempered father and son was made more bitter by the discovery that Oxford had shaken the foundations of John's childhood faith and that he would not take Orders. Ironically, it was while he was living in the rooms that had been John Wesley's that his own youthful Methodism was dropping away. This refusal to walk in the appointed ways brought to Morley a kind of hardship that neither Stephen nor Harrison ever knew. He had to leave Oxford at the end of his third year with only a Pass degree and to struggle for a living, cut off from his family, in real poverty and loneliness.

Naturally his own Oxford memories were dulled by the lack of distinction and the unhappy ending of his university career, and the glimpses that Mr. Hirst has gathered

[9] *Recollections*, I, 7; "On Pattison's Memoirs," in *Critical Miscellanies*, III, 149–51.

[10] Hirst, I, 16–7.

from those who knew him add little to the record. His close friend Frederick Arnold remembered his earnest way of throwing himself into the subjects that absorbed him, and his "peculiar, sub-acid flavour of humour." The two men who mattered most to him were his tutor, Thomas Fowler, and the senior commoner, Cotter Morison. Fowler was both a fine scholar and an ardent reformer, with a breadth of interests very rare among Oxford dons of that time. "He made me Aristotelian and not Platonist," Morley remarked, "for apart from tutorial teaching that was, I think, the Lancastrian temperament."

Indeed the core of Oxford's training was still the study of Aristotle.[11] All through the fifties the mind of Oxford was shaped mainly by the School of *Literae Humaniores*, that study of the ancient philosophers and historians which Harrison defended, for all its narrowness, as the most bracing training to be found in England. Newman, who had so deeply shaken the old order, was yet true to its spirit when he wrote, in *The Idea of a University*, "While we are men we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelian. . . . In many matters, to think correctly is to think like Aristotle; and we are his disciples, whether we will or no." Gladstone declared that although Oxford had not taught him the value of liberty, yet by making the love of truth his dominant motive it had laid the foundations of his liberalism.[12] And for Morley this

[11] Mark Pattison, "Oxford Studies," in *Oxford Essays* (London, 1855); Walter Bagehot, "Oxford," in *Literary Studies* (London, 1898); Goldwin Smith, "Oxford University Reform," in *Oxford Essays*.

[12] Morley, *Life of Gladstone* (New York, 1911), vol. I, ch. iii.

Aristotelian training in accurate, critical thinking strengthened the native independence of mind that made him a radical and a rationalist. The same Oxford discipline that shaped Newman's long search for authority urged Morley on his quest for freedom of mind and spirit.[13]

But in mid-Victorian Oxford the rationalist and Catholic currents were strangely mingled. The Oxford Movement had quickened and enriched that sense of the past that no ardent spirit could escape. In the austere Evangelicalism, the bare rationalism, of Morley's upbringing and training, Oxford lighted a flame that made men call him "the mystic of rationalism." [14] In glorious St. Mary's, which had echoed to the voices of Pusey and Newman, he was stirred not only by the vigor of Dean Mansel's Bampton Lectures, his reply to Mill's teachings, but by the "unction" of Bishop Wilberforce's sermons. There is an echo of Oxford in the words that he once wrote to Harrison: "Oh, that we were in those old ages of noble, grave belief!" For no more than Newman himself could Morley have resisted the climate of that home of lost causes — even though he could call it the home of "so many bad causes." He could write of Oxford, as Stephen wrote of Cambridge, with irony and devotion. And one passage of Morley's can stand with the unforgotten words of Arnold and Hardy and Santayana — those who, whether as sons or aliens, have loved the ways of Oxford: "That university, from which so many noblest ideas have

[13] W. S. Knickerbocker, *Creative Oxford* (Syracuse University Press), p. 187.

[14] Algernon Cecil, "Lord Morley," in *Six Oxford Thinkers* (London,

come . . . , in which every vision, though vain as the shadow of smoke, every aspiration after a nobler life, however little in accord with the coarser outside world, finds a home and finds disciples. . . ." [15]

For to Morley too "the association of antique halls and grey timeworn towers went deeper than the schools, and companionship was more than lectures." First of comrades was the engaging and utterly unacademic Cotter Morison, afterward one of the most brilliant of the English Positivists, always so faithful a friend to Morley. His blithe spirit, which ranged joyously from church architecture to boxing, made him the leader of those "endless discussions, morning, noon, and night" in which, then as now, education comes alive. It was Morison who brought to these boys that fire-bearer Carlyle. To Morley in his Oxford years Morison seemed the very spirit of youth.

For Meredith and Morison, Stephen and Harrison, Morris and Swinburne and Morley, the eighteen-fifties were stirring years to be young in. There was a release from old fears and restraints, an intoxication of new hopes, an excitement that still echoes from Morley's chapter "Spirit of the Time." The old, narrow creed of evangelical salvation and *laissez-faire* competitive success was fast dissolving under the Tractarian revival of beauty and worship, the indignation of Carlyle, the satire of Dickens, the diverse revolts of the Christian Socialists and the Pre-Raphaelites. *In Memoriam* had set men's doubts to haunting music and seemed to resolve them in the larger hope. It was in 1859, the year Morley left Oxford, that there

appeared two books which we can now see as the turning-point of the century: *The Origin of Species*, which gave a new frame to thought, and Mill's *Liberty*, which showed the way of the free mind. The great winds of change were rising, a change in men's ways of thinking and living as great as any we have since known. These young men of the fifties had to remake their minds in the midst of an outer and an inner revolution. Indeed they were much more like our own young revolutionary writers than the latter can imagine: these young Victorians, too, put family-worship and the sanctity of competition at the bottom of the virtues, social justice and intellectual honesty at the top.[16]

"If we imagine Victorian England without Oxford and Cambridge," says Mr. G. M. Young, "what barrier can we see against an all-encroaching materialism and professionalism?" Far sooner than Mr. Young could have dreamed when he wrote these words, we are looking back longingly "as to the culminating achievement of European culture, to the life of the University-bred classes in England of the mid-nineteenth century, set against the English landscape as it was, as it can be no more. . . ."[17] Against the new barbarism that shatters college walls and cathedral towers and European culture, the spirit of the English universities keeps a refuge and a defence for the free mind of man.

[16] C. Day Lewis, "Writers and Morals," in *A Time to Dance* (New York, 1936).

[17] G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (London, 1936), pp. 96, 99.

# CHAPTER III

## MASTERS AND FRIENDS

IT IS far harder for most of us to live imaginatively in the mid-nineteenth than in the sixteenth century. The ideas of our great-grandfathers are not yet old; they are merely old-fashioned. And the memoirs of those days were usually written by men who had forgotten the feel of being young. Morley's *Recollections* is a record of mighty men and historic events; but it is a twilight book, shadowed by old age and war and steeped, as Lytton Strachey has remarked, in the Victorian spirit that blurs its outlines with a haze of reverence.[1] But it was a young man who went down from Oxford in 1859 to live perilously in London as a free-lance journalist, who edited the *Fortnightly Review* and wrote the *Edmund Burke* and the French Studies and those letters to his sister and to Frederic Harrison which Mr. Hirst has printed — a young man hot-tempered and passionate, in love with music and poetry and living. There is the same crusading spirit in the writings of Morley's early Liberalism as there is, for instance, in Mr. Stephen Spender's *Forward from Liberalism*. The ideas that went into the making of Mill's *On Liberty* and Morley's *On Compromise* may perhaps

[1] "A Statesman: Lord Morley," in *Characters and Commentaries* (New York, 1933).

live for us again if we remember how they stirred a generation that once was young.

It is one of the ironies of ideas that the thinker who for twenty years dominated the English universities of the mid-nineteenth century was not only outside their walls but their keenest critic.[2] For John Stuart Mill was the real master of Morley's generation. Oxford might try to answer Mill's philosophy of experience, but it had already accepted his *Logic* and *Political Economy* and made them required study for men reading for the philosophical examinations.[3]

Again and again the memoirs of these mid-Victorians tell of the extraordinary power of Mill as what Asquith called "purveyor-general of thought" for a generation.[4] Henry Sidgwick declared that for a hundred and fifty years no thinker within Cambridge had had an influence at all equal to that of Mill from outside.[5] Charles Dilke's list of favorite books for 1864 put Mill next to the Bible and Shakespeare.[6] Leslie Stephen remembered that he and his friends spent hour after hour discussing Mill as keenly as medieval commentators used to discuss the doctrines of Aristotle.[7] Henry Adams, describing in his

[2] Mill, "Civilisation," in *Dissertations and Discussions* (London, 1859), p. 193 ff.

[3] Pattison, "Oxford Studies," and Hirst, I, 22.

[4] H. H. Asquith, *Some Aspects of the Victorian Age* (Romanes Lecture, 1918).

[5] H. Sidgwick, "Philosophy at Cambridge," in *Mind*, I, 235.

[6] Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Life of Sir Charles Dilke* (London, 1917).

[7] L. Stephen, *Some Early Impressions*, p. 76.

letters the Oxford of 1863, "that most Catholic of conservative places," reported that "John Stuart Mill ranks even there rather higher than the authorities of the place, with which he is waging internecine war." [8] And at Harvard George Herbert Palmer was finding in the *Liberty* and *Utilitarianism* "an epoch in my intellectual life" and a moral creed.[9]

The "sacred book for students who claimed to be genuine Liberals" [10] was Mill's *System of Logic.* Those yellowed pages of fine type and close-knit argument once stirred the minds of young men; how deeply, the marks and notes in Morley's copy bear witness. For Mill's *Logic* was more than a textbook; it sprang from Mill's intense conviction that the "false philosophy" of intuition was "the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions." [11] And so, by developing a theory of logic based on association and experience, he was trying to meet the intuitive philosophy on its own ground, to drive it from its stronghold. Nowadays we know that the empirical foundation on which Mill built his theories of induction and causation, Hume's idea of the mind as a bundle of successive perceptions, was quite inadequate; that Mill's conclusions are sometimes inconsistent with his premises. His weaknesses have been exposed by the Idealists T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley who succeeded him —

[8] *A Cycle of Adams Letters* (Boston, 1920), p. 95 ff.

[9] G. H. Palmer, *The Autobiography of a Philosopher* (Boston, 1930), p. 15.

[10] Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians* (London), III, 76.

[11] Mill, *Autobiography* (New York), pp. 225–6.

and whose concern for social welfare was just as deep as his own. But the strength and the truth in Mill's *Logic* were a source of some of the most fearless thinking and living of an intrepid generation. To Morley and his fellows the *Logic* was not only a step towards sounder thinking about society; it was a tool for the building of a better world.

The driving force of the *Logic* came to them mainly from its famous sixth book, "On the Logic of the Social Sciences." Its purpose was nothing less than to show the existence of universal laws, not only of the formation of character but of the succession of states of society; and to outline the "inverse deductive" method of formulating a real social science by first deriving its laws from the facts of history and then deducing and so verifying them from the principles of human nature. This concept of a science of society was of course the great thesis of Auguste Comte, the founder of Sociology and coiner of the word. Mill had read the first two volumes of the *Positive Philosophy* while he was writing his first draft of the *Logic* and had grasped its importance. But he had already worked out the great idea of social law, and the development of his method was all his own. What Mill achieved was really to humanize logic, to make it the method of social intelligence.[12]

And some of Mill's ideas have outlived his instrument,

[12] Garnier, *John Stuart Mill and the Philosophy of Mediation* (New York, 1919).

the crude associational psychology that he inherited from his father and Hartley. Today psychologists deal with concrete situations rather than general laws, with the knowing process more than abstract knowledge. We are only beginning to understand either the laws of heredity, of which Mill knew nothing, or the effects of environment, of which he expected too much. We have not yet reduced either individual or social behavior to an exact science. But the assumption that underlies all Mill's thinking, "the conviction that we have a real power over the formation of our own character," has a way of coming back by the window as often as it is thrust out of the door. No one who has read the *Autobiography* can forget Mill's description of those crucial years of dejection when the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, the paralyzing sense that he was the helpless slave of circumstances, weighed on him like a black nightmare. Light broke when he realized that psychological determinism does not involve moral fatalism. For character, he reasoned in the chapter of the *Logic* treating "Of Liberty and Necessity," is formed by circumstances, including our own organization, but our desire to mould it is one of those circumstances.

We cannot just dismiss Mill's argument as wishful thinking, born of the will to believe in a doctrine as necessary to his peace of mind as to his mission as "a reformer in opinions." For here is the same conclusion in the words of Dr. Alexis Carrel: "Organic and mental developments

are not inexorable. They can be modified, in some measure, according to our will, because we are a movement." [13]

And it is not a Victorian moralist but the great physicist Dr. Max Planck who concludes, in a study of "Causality in Nature," "In my opinion there is not the slightest contradiction between the domination of a strict causality in the sense here adopted and the freedom of human will." For acts of will are governed by the law of ethics, which "cannot be comprehended solely by scientific methods." [14]

Indeed the speculations of the new physics seem nearer to the exploring mind of Mill than to the mechanistic dogmas of Haeckel or even to the "firm foundation of unyielding despair" of Bertrand Russell.

"You may much more rationally call a man free," wrote Morley, "when you believe his will to follow determinate antecedents — desires, aversions, habits of character, opportunity — because these antecedents are controllable." *Control:* that was the key to the philosophic Liberalism of Mill and Morley: control, through understanding the causes, of the conditions that shape our characters and our lives. For they were the inheritors of a tradition that had vitalized European thought: Bacon's vision of the control of nature by scientific method; Locke's philosophy of experience as the instrument for remaking the social order; Condorcet's faith in the progress and the future of man. And though we know now, as they could not, that science

[13] *Man the Unknown* (New York, 1935), pp. 188–9.

[14] "Causality in Nature," in *The Philosophy of Physics* (New York, 1936), pp. 80–1.

cannot control human relations or reach the deep sources of suffering, we still hold to something of their will to mould things nearer to our desire.

But deeper even than the power of Mill's ideas was the influence of his spirit, his effort to understand the other side, what Morley called his *justesse*. Of this temper one outstanding example was his essay on Coleridge, written in 1840 to follow the essay on Bentham and to show to the Radical readers of the *London and Westminster Review* the neglected truths behind Conservatism. For as Bentham was "the great questioner of things established," so Coleridge was "the great awakener of the spirit of philosophy" within tradition. Bentham made men ask, "Is it true?" Coleridge, "What is the meaning of it?" [15] And so, by going to the roots of things, Coleridge was actually showing the essential, the "radical" way of reform. In challenging the vested interests of prejudice and injustice, Mill was the heir of Bentham and of James Mill; in teaching men to find the reasons for their beliefs he was the follower of Coleridge.

For one of Mill's disciples the lesson of Coleridge meant even more than the lesson of Bentham. Mill's two essays were reprinted in Morley's Oxford years, and it was the "Coleridge," he says, that "first awoke in many of us . . . that sense of truth having many mansions, and that desire and power of sympathy with the past. . . ." [16] The sense of

[15] "Bentham," in *London and Westminster Review*, August 1838; "Coleridge," March 1840.

[16] *Critical Miscellanies*, III, 131.

truth having many mansions, the lesson of Coleridge and Comte and Mill, is the clue to much that is best in Morley's thought and public life: to his interpretation of Burke and Emerson and Wordsworth, his understanding of Chamberlain and Gladstone. In his sympathy with ways of thought and life so different from his own, Morley was a critic greater than his creed.

Not a creator but a "mediator" of ideas: so Mill saw himself, and so we see him now. The thinker who moved on from the orthodox *laissez-faire* theory of the first edition of his *Political Economy* (1848) through its revisions to the anticipations of collectivism in his unfinished chapters on Socialism (1879); from Bentham's "calculus of pleasures" to the "morality of self-devotion" of his own *Utilitarianism* (1861); and from the stern atheism of his father to the modified theism of his own *Essays on Religion* (1873), had, as Santayana has said, "a deeper and a sweeter mind than his critics." His theories, full of the inconsistencies of a transitional thinker,[17] are open to attack from every side. But when criticism has done its uttermost, Mill remains. In his own life, as the *Autobiography* shows, he did resolve some of the oppositions that he could not reconcile in his thought. And so it was not only his friends and contemporaries who saw him as "the Saint of Rationalism." Even today, to a young Marxist like Stephen Spender, who has forsaken the Liberalism of his fathers, the figure of Mill still shines with

[17] Ernest Barker, *Political Thought in England* (Home University Library, New York, 1915), p. 206.

"the clarity of the saint who has actually given his life to an idea." [18]

The portraits of Mill and Meredith, those "Two Early Friends and Teachers," stand out from the gray background of Morley's *Recollections* in the sharp morning light of those first London years. For a young journalist trying to make not only a living but a way of life, the friendship of these two was more than meat.

It was the little essay "New Ideas," printed in the redoubtable *Saturday Review* of October 21, 1865, that introduced Morley to Mill. It is Morley's first protest against the great Victorian superstition, his first expression of his own creed, the theme of *On Compromise.* Those who believe in a progress that works of itself are just as truly enemies of new ideas as the unthinking and the cynical. Without fearless, tireless effort there is no progress. Mill wrote at once to the unknown author. "Wherever I might have seen that article," said the note, "I should have felt a strong wish to know who was its author, as it shows an unusual amount of qualities which go toward making the most valuable kind of writer for the general public." That note must have seemed to Morley a kind of accolade.

For to Mill, as to every great teacher, belonged "the mysterious secret of drawing men after him." "For us he lives and acts," wrote Frederic Harrison after Mill's death. "We grow yet in his learning; we are kindled by his enthusiasm." [19] His power over younger men sprang not

[18] Stephen Spender, *Forward from Liberalism* (New York, 1937), p. 85.

[19] *Fortnightly*, June 1873.

only from the quickening influence of his mind, stirring them to think for themselves, but from the self-consecration that made his whole life, as he once said, an effort "to take up his cross and to bear it." [20]

II

Nothing is farther from today than the syntheses of yesterday. Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer — giant builders of towering systems — are to most of us no more than landmarks left behind. Yet, as a recent study of Comte has shown,[21] his great assertion that the methods of science can be applied to human affairs made him one of the pioneers of modern thought. Though the *Positive Philosophy* is now but little read, its effect on the development of the social sciences, like that of Locke on the French Enlightenment, spread far beyond its source. We have absorbed the thesis of Comte as completely as we have forgotten his system.

Positivists were not necessarily positive — although most of them actually were. "The word is French," as the Peers in *Iolanthe* say: *positif*, scientific, proved by evidence. What Comte attempted was nothing less than to build a philosophy, a religion, and a social order on the realities of history and the proved qualities of men. Seeing history as essentially the growth of mind, he worked out his law of the Three States of Knowledge, theological, metaphysical, and positive, and his classification of the sciences.

[20] Morley, "The Journals of Caroline Fox," in *Fortnightly*, March 1882.

[21] F. S. Marvin, *Comte: The Founder of Sociology* (New York, 1936).

Seeing the idea of humanity as the great fact of history, he produced not only a religion — a worship of Humanity past, present, and to come — but a "polity," complete with priesthood and sacraments.

In this strange mixture of truth and fantasy there were, for certain English men and women, two strong appeals: the idea of law and the motive of duty. Laws of nature were being revealed by Lamarck, by Lyell, even by the author of *Vestiges of Creation*; laws of history had been sketched by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Buckle, and many others. Comte's science of society seemed, as Harrison declared, to have laid the foundations of all progress. But above all it was the practical, moral purpose that attracted a generation brought up in the evangelical and utilitarian climate of reform.[22] "The motive of serving Humanity": that, as Comte himself said, was the source of his religion; that was its hold on free spirits who could neither accept the old orthodoxy nor live without a faith.

The first English discoverer of Comte was John Stuart Mill, and his generosity in encouraging an unknown thinker was as characteristic as his candor in criticizing Comte's later work.[23] George Henry Lewes, in his *Biographical History of Philosophy*, did valiant service in making Positivism known in England; Harriet Martineau transcribed and condensed the *Positive Philosophy* with a devotion truly heroic: "Many a passage did I write with

[22] L. Cazamian, *Modern England* (London, 1912), p. 269.

[23] *Lettres Inédites de John Stuart Mill à Auguste Comte* (Paris, 1899); Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 165, and *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (London, 1865).

the tears falling into my lap." And George Eliot found in Positivism both the satisfaction of her scientific interest aroused by Spencer and Lewes and the answer to her deeply religious cravings. If her Savonarola and Daniel Deronda too often talk like Positivist preachers, she has wrought into the struggles of her heroines, of Maggie and Romola and Dorothea, her own religion of human sympathy.

"There are," Leslie Stephen remarked, "perhaps not more than half a dozen disciples, prepared to go all lengths; and it has been said that half of them are suspected of heresy." (Stephen himself once said that if he had gone to Oxford he might have been a Positivist; he had learned much from Comte and could understand his power over earnest souls.) The little sect of English Positivists was supposed to consist of three persons and no God. Congreve, who had left Oxford and resigned his fellowship to devote himself to the cause, formed the Positivist Union; the split between him and Lafitte, Comte's official successor, produced the Positivist Committee, of which Harrison was president for twenty-five years. For Positivism Harrison gladly gave up the chance of a public or professional career. In season and out of season he fought for it, against Huxley, who labeled it Catholicism minus Christianity, Spencer, Cairnes, Fitzjames Stephen, and all comers. Harder to meet than arguments was ridicule like Mallock's burlesque, *The New Paul and Virginia, or Positivism on an Island.* An out-and-out Positivist, one suspects, must have been a bit lacking in humor.

It is hard to take Harrison quite seriously when he is exhorting or expatiating, "labouring," as he put it, "in swelling the strain of this symphonic life." A new religion, as Stephen said, always has a comic side to the wicked.

It was no wonder that Morley almost became a Positivist, with Lewes and George Eliot and Cotter Morison to bring him in touch with the London group. "The system," he says, "supported as it was by the attraction of Comte's survey of history, laid strong hold of me; and at one time I was not far off from a formal union with this new church." But he was held back by his anti-sectarian instinct, and by the criticisms of Mill and his *Fortnightly* comrades, Spencer, Tyndall, and Huxley. Some of his earliest essays[24] reflect his first Positivist enthusiasm, but they were soon outgrown and never reprinted.

Morley's increasingly critical attitude toward Comtist dogmas speaks out in his candid letters to Frederic Harrison, written to try out his own ideas and his friend's "ferocities." By 1871 he was writing: "But I also see growing up among you — among us, if you like — tendencies to iterate the formulas of the master, instead of constantly applying, translating, and vivifying them: to pour malediction on men for not embracing Positivism, instead of explaining to them what Positivism is. . . ."

When Morley's *Voltaire* was published, Harrison praised

[24] "Mr. Froude on the Science of History," *Fortnightly*, August 1867; "Some Greek Conceptions of Social Growth," in *Critical Miscellanies* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1871).

it enthusiastically but reproached its author for not acknowledging in it his great debt to Comte. In his spirited reply Morley declared that, though he owed to Comte his whole idea of history and much of his estimate of Voltaire and had actually written and discarded a preface defining his obligations, he could not follow Comte all the way:

"Everybody calls me and writes of me and my poor productions as Comtist. Let them. I am not Comtist but Positivist. I accept your statement (your own, I mean) of the Positive Problem. I do not accept your solution — certainly not Comte's new organisation, which I entirely dislike."

For the time being he would stay in the Positivist cockboat instead of "jumping into my own wash-tub, and fighting against the hideous billows of British hypocrisy on my own account." But he warned his friend:

"My mind isn't made up. I don't know Comtism . . . well enough to be competent either to accept or to repudiate it. I want three or four more years of reading of him, and of social observation. I believe I shall become more and more Millite, less and less Comtist. But I must wait."

And so it was. Like his master, Morley moved beyond the bounds of the system and rejected the *Positive Polity*. His final word is the essay on Comte written in 1876 for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and reprinted in the *Critical Miscellanies*. When he had finished it, he burst out fiercely to the faithful Harrison:

"I now see the incomparable merit of the Nicene Creed. You can't get Comtism into that snug space. Comte pro-

vokes me more than ever. I have read and read and meditated and re-meditated — and at the end of it my whole soul revolts — and how *you* of all men on this bright planet have gone over to such an idol doth perplex me by day and by night. . . . No more — or we quarrel." [25]

Harrison's retort must have burned the page.

In fact Morley's essay expresses, as Austin Harrison has said, the English attitude to Comte. It deals very justly with the inexorable will and iron devotion of Comte's character, and with his real service to thought. It describes the analysis of social evolution in the *Positive Philosophy* as one of the great achievements of the human intellect. But the attempt to systematize family and social relations in the *Positive Polity* is called irrational and reactionary. And as for the exaltation of Humanity into a Great Being, it is just "utilitarianism crowned by a fantastic decoration."

For Morley came to realize that the worship of Humanity was no religion for men's deepest needs. In a manuscript notebook now in the Morley Library he wrote, in January, 1874: "Will the inevitable spiritual uprising against materialism and secularity be kindled by Positivism?" And his answer is, "No, it will spring from the old source, this time and perhaps the next and the next." For Positivism has no book of martyrs and high examples. Above all, it does not strike the imagination. We want a new way of life, as well as a new teaching and preaching.

[25] Hirst, I, 192–3, 199–200; II, 16.

The failures of Positivism are clear enough now: its overconfidence in reason and in the pace of progress; its assurance of basing a new religion on science and "the collective goodness of men." For us, facing the worst that human cruelty can do, it is unthinkable that men could worship humanity, or even spell it with a capital H. We have to remember that these mid-Victorians belonged, as it has been said, to the happiest class of the happiest country in the happiest period of the world. And we have to remember too that the religion of duty was not merely professed but lived by men and women of brave good will.

III

"I don't see," said an old clergyman when *The Origin of Species* appeared, "what there is to make a book about. God created them." But minds already fed by Mill and Comte and Lyell and Spencer knew that things were not quite so simple. Denunciations of Darwin have rung so loud through the years that we forget those Victorians who, like Meredith and Morley and Leslie Stephen, took evolution in their stride. Both Mill and Comte had prepared the way for an organic view of society. Their followers, accepting the new genetic concept, worked out its implications in a developing social morality. And if they sometimes raised problems that they could not solve, if their answers here and there seem improvised, at least they did not evade the issues. Their thinking never lost its continuity or its integrity.

*The Origin of Species* was published the year Morley

came down from Oxford. Two years later he was lecturing on the Darwinian theory to the Mechanics' Institute of Blackburn. One would like to know what he said and how his audience took it. He was a bold young man to tackle that explosive theory the year after Bishop Wilberforce had tried to demolish it at the memorable 1860 Oxford meeting of the British Association. And it was the demolisher of Wilberforce, the "gladiator-general of science," Huxley, who became Morley's tutor in this third stage of his radical's progress. With Huxley, Spencer, Tyndall, and Herschel as contributors, the *Fortnightly* under Morley became one of Darwin's mightiest champions.

In some of Morley's first *Fortnightly* essays we can actually watch his mind in process of remoulding utilitarian concepts in evolutionary terms. His "A Fragment on the Genesis of Morals" (March 1868) contains a sketch of the growth of law in pioneer communities written at a very safe distance from "Texas or Nevada or Nebraska." But what he was trying to illustrate was really the idea of a developing morality, what Leslie Stephen called "social vitality."

Another article, "Mr. Lecky's First Chapter" (May 1869), was a brilliant criticism of the *History of European Morals*; Lecky's distortion of Utilitarianism was exposed with a devastating syllogism substituting "Welsh rabbit" for "virtue." In defending Mill, Morley showed how far his own mind had moved, not only in transforming utilitarian morality into what he called "beneficential ethics,"

but in realizing that "mankind cannot live without a religion."

When two years later Morley tried to mediate between the utilitarian and the evolutionary ways of thought, Darwin himself replied with the humility of his greatness.[26] Morley's long discussion of *The Descent of Man* in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of March 20 and 21 and April 12, 1871, maintained that Mill, like Darwin, based morality on the social feelings of mankind; and so between the two there was no real quarrel. Darwin's reply admitted that he had misunderstood Mill, but added that he had found Mill's words somewhat contradictory, "especially as he says so little about the social instincts." In fact Morley's eagerness to reconcile the teachings of his master with the new concept kept him at first from seeing that they were not wholly reconcilable, that Mill did not think of social instincts in Darwin's sense. But it was not long before he realized the difference. If only, he wrote in his criticism of Mill's essay on "Nature" (*Fortnightly*, November 1874), Mill had revised the essay after Darwin's theory was fully known, he would have adopted the evolutionary idea of experience as social and not merely individual.

Too many of the Victorians took their evolution with a lazy fatalism or an easy optimism. Morley rejected either escape. He knew that evolution, as he put it in *On Compromise*, "is not a force but a process, not a cause but a law," that the social process can work only through human energy and effort. And the evidence of the scientists

[26] *More Letters of Charles Darwin* (New York, 1903), I, 324–9.

only deepened his sense of "nature's appalling law of merciless and incessant destruction." For to some of the Victorians "Nature red in tooth and claw with ravine" was not just a too-familiar quotation but a grim fact, seen by the poet and the philosopher and confirmed by the biologist. James Mill had revolted against the eighteenth-century gospel of a benevolent Nature and had stamped his protest on his son's sensitive mind. In all Victorian prose there is no more burning passage than John Stuart Mill's indictment in the "Nature" of the cruelty of "Nature's everyday performances."

It was, of course, in "Evolution and Ethics," Huxley's famous Romanes Lecture of 1893, that this stern disillusion found its classic expression. Attacking the comfortable creed of evolution as inevitable progress, Huxley struck out boldly: Progress depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less on running away from it, but on combating it, on substituting for it another, an ethical process. Huxley has been reproached for picturing the cosmic process as "the unscrupulous seizing upon all that can be grasped, the tenacious holding of all that can be kept" — in fact, the Victorian competitive society.[27] And it is true that his insistence on ruthless struggle in nature ignores the other equally natural factors of coöperation and mutual aid; that you cannot separate the ethical from the cosmic process (as he himself admitted in a candid footnote); that man and his ideals are themselves natural.

[27] H. J. Massingham, "Thomas Henry Huxley," in *The Great Victorians*, edited by H. J. and Hugh Massingham (New York, 1932).

But his was a valiant protest against the perilous pseudo-scientific cult that was exalting the survival of the fittest into a moral law. To charge Huxley, as does Mr. H. J. Massingham, with fostering the delusion that man is a fighting animal is to forget his constant appeal to man as a thinking animal. Though Mill and Morley and Huxley and Hardy, like the poets of *Job* and of Greek and Elizabethan drama, were profoundly moved by "the unfathomable injustice of the nature of things," they were never driven to blind escape from pain or to shallow worship of force. Their fearless acceptance of tragedy is itself an affirmation of man's unconquerable mind.

IV

> Thou, fighting for poor humankind, wilt feel
> The strength of Roland in thy wrist to hew
> A chasm sheer into the barrier rock,
> And bring the army of the faithful through.

In these lines of Meredith's sonnet "To J. M." is a great man's tribute to a younger comrade. Of all the friendships of Meredith, wrote J. A. Hammerton in 1911,[28] it is that with Morley on which we most want more light. We have it now, from Meredith's letters and from those few sunlit pages of the *Recollections*. Morley's fine portrait of Meredith at Copsham, "Phoebus Apollo descending upon us from Olympus" — coming to the morning meal after a long hour's stride over woods and hillsides with the brightness of sunrise on his brow — is worthy of the crea-

[28] *George Meredith* (Edinburgh, 1911), p. 119.

tor of Diana and Beauchamp. It catches, too, the secret of Meredith's power: more than his generous help and encouragement to an unknown free lance, more than his wise counsels of writing and living, was the radiant personality that showered on old scenes a "sparkling cataract" of fresh life and joy, and kindled commonplaces with "a new light as of stars."

It was a friendship unbroken to the end of Meredith's life. And it became a friendship of equals, two great-minded men who fulfilled one another. Morley's mind, more prosaic (as he was the first to say), but steadier, unswerving in loyalty, supplemented Meredith's genius, brilliant, yet often obscured, uncontrolled. The older quickened, the younger strengthened. How deep was Meredith's trust in this friend, the only one on whom he called to stand beside him at his wife's grave, his letters tell us: "But the talk I get with you is mountain atmosphere to the soul"; "I do not see you, but I live much with you"; "Your coming (both) was breath of life to me"; and, toward the last, "After so many years the love and trust are the same." The loveliest of Meredith comes out in his charming messages to Morley's wife, "the Rose of Patterdale"; the noblest in such a letter as this:

"I greet you in the first hour of the New One [Year] after a look at the stars from my chalet door, and listening to the bells. . . . I thought of you and how it might be with you this year; hoped for good: saw beyond good and evil, to great stillness, another form of moving for you and me. It seems to me that Spirit is, how, where,

and by what means involving us, none can say. But in this life there is no life save in spirit." [29]

They stood together on some of the sharpest questions of their time: their hope for the liberation of women, their grasp of evolution as age-long struggle toward thought — "More brain, O Lord, more brain!" Where Meredith moved beyond Morley was in his refusal to assume an inevitable conflict of Nature and Man: "Our great error has been (the error of all religions, I fancy) to raise a spiritual system of antagonism to Nature." Perhaps the real difference between them — for Meredith too saw the tooth and claw as well as the lark ascending — was one of temperament. Meredith's full-blooded, tough-minded zest for life could share neither Hardy's "twilight view" nor Morley's strain of sadness. For Meredith's reading of Earth as "spirit in her clods," his faith in man as a harmony of blood, brain, and spirit, were less a philosophy than a poet's vision. By that vision, and by his sometimes triumphant art, one of the most neglected, least outgrown of the Victorians outsoars the fret and fever of his day, the confusion and defeat of ours.

A man's ideas may matter less than his spirit, the quality of his mind. The quality of Morley was his rare blend of intense conviction and wide sympathies. Those who knew him little thought him cold and austere; those who knew him best have told us how warm and lovable he really was. The genius for friendship that he found in Joseph Chamberlain was in himself, a glow that warms the sober

[29] *The Letters of George Meredith* (New York, 1912), I, 287.

chapters of the *Recollections*. There is a birthday book of his in the Morley Library, with its autographs of men of letters and men of affairs, of lords and labor leaders, that reads like a roll-call of Victorian society (not just Society) of the eighties. "Looking back," he once wrote, "I only know that men vastly my superiors, alike in letters and the field of politics, have held me in kind regard and cared for my friendship." And his journal records that Lord Rosebery "wondered how it was that members of Parliament came to see me so much, and to talk so freely to me."

Some of his friends have told the reason. "No kinder heart," wrote one, "nor one more sensitive ever sweetened the intercourse of life. If I had to choose any one word to express the quality of his soul, I should say it was loving-kindness." [30]

Loving-kindness — and the integrity that Gladstone sensed from his first meeting with Morley: "If there was a secret on which depended my own and my family's honour, I would trust it to this man without a moment's hesitation." [31]

It was to Morley that Leslie Stephen turned, as Meredith had done, in the time of sorrow.[32] It was Morley whom Herbert Spencer asked to say the last words over his ashes: "You stand out above others as one from whom words would come most fitly." To Gladstone Morley was

[30] J. H. Morgan, *John, Viscount Morley* (Boston, 1924), p. 105.
[31] Jules Jusserand, *What Me Befell* (Boston, 1933), p. 146.
[32] Maitland, pp. 254–6; *Recollections*, I, 117–8.

always "about the best stay I have," although they differed on the deepest of issues. Not all their quick retorts and fiery arguments could long divide him from Frederic Harrison, "one of my most intimate and attached friends for fifty years." With Chamberlain, closest friend and brother-in-arms, the parting of their ways in the Irish Home Rule crisis of 1886 brought the sharpest break in both their lives.[33] But old memories and the magnanimity of time wrought at last their healing. "As his end drew near," wrote Morley, "we sent one another heartfelt words of affectionate farewell."

It is only through his own letters recorded by Mr. Hirst or now and then through the eyes of his closest friends that we catch glimpses of the younger Morley: that slight, alert figure, hot-tempered and sensitive and proud. The reserve that forbade a biography and shut from his *Recollections* almost every trace of his intimate life has been faithfully respected by those who knew him best. And so we usually think of him as Winston Churchill has pictured him,[34] one of that group of Victorian statesmen with a dignity and a greatmindedness that are in public life no more. (That record of Churchill's deep affection for his father's friend, of the six years' companionship, when his seat in the Cabinet was next to Morley's, of a friendship unbroken by the parting of 1914, is very moving reading now.) Only a winning and gracious per-

[33] J. L. Garvin, *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (New York), vol. I (1932), vol. II (1933).

[34] "John Morley," in *Great Contemporaries* (New York, 1937).

sonality, the power of courtesy, of intellect and character, could in those aristocratic times, as Churchill says, have won for this Blackburn doctor's son his place among the mighty. The charm of his companionship sprang partly from his keen Lancastrian thrusts of wit, more from the searching play of his mind, and most from the exquisite tact of sympathy described by one who was close to him: "He always brought out the best there was in you. When you were with him you said things you didn't know you could say." J. A. Spender said that he was "one of the very few people who seemed really to be arguing for truth and not for victory," who really saw the other side.[35] "His manner," said another, "was of a beautiful simplicity and courtliness." That connoisseur of talk, the Countess of Oxford and Asquith, called him "the best talker I ever heard, the most fastidious and fascinating of men."

"His talk," explained J. St. Loe Strachey, "was exactly right. It was not too suave; it was not too dogmatic; it was not too erudite; and yet it was never empty. . . . In a word, John Morley talked like a reasonable being and never roared at you, either physically or metaphorically. His, indeed, was not a roaring mind, but one which essentially allowed for differences. . . . All this fastidiousness, conservatism, and sympathy, mixed with an intellect of great daring, and with an overmastering desire to face facts and know the truth, made him, as I have said, the most delightful of men. . . . Morley had a benignity and

[35] *Westminster Gazette*, September 1926.

charm which would have made him eminent in the best society that the world has ever seen." [36]

"Burdens fell off clean as one thought of these clear spirits, our teachers, friends, and leaders": so wrote Morley after an hour's talk with Asquith and Lyall of "our fathers that begat us." And there were the other clear spirits, the poets to whom he turned from the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world. It may have been Arnold who led him to Goethe as one of the liberators of the modern mind. Morley's saying that "most men and women of a certain cultivation outside the churches today find their moral stay in the wisdom of Goethe" is evidence enough that Goethe was for him less poet than teacher. It was as a psalm of life that he read and re-read "Das Göttliche," "the Hymn for men," as Meredith called it. Yet nearer to Morley's own deep mood of resolute stoicism was the Roman poet who had turned denial into courage. To Lucretius Morley gave the chapter of his *Recollections* called "An Easter Digression," sombre musings on man's mortality. *De Rerum Natura* may not, he grants, be a book to live with, but it is a haunting voice of some of our insistent questions, a voice not of despair but of fearless living. And in Lucretius he found not only daring thought and piercing tenderness but mighty music, "the great open diapason of the Lucretian hexameter."

A third poet-companion was closer to an English mind than either the German or the Roman could be. For in the poetry and criticism of Wordsworth, as T. S. Eliot has

[36] *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 1924.

happily said, there was a profound spiritual revival that was caught by some of the great Victorian humanitarians rather than by the ruling poets. On George Eliot and Arnold and Mill and Stephen and Morley the influence of Wordsworth was a quickening and a healing power in which beauty and meaning were inseparable. Often and often in days snatched from Parliament and public speaking Morley "banished politics and spent most of the day sauntering on the shore, with Wordsworth and Arnold in my pocket."

It was his first walks with Meredith "over the heights of Hindhead in his beloved south-west wind, or along the running waters of Wordsworth's northern dales" that woke in Morley the love of the English landscape that is the deep root of the sung and unsung poetry of England. All through his journals and letters there are glimpses of the Lake Country "which had for years been my earthly paradise," of the Scottish highlands, Irish glens, and his own beloved Surrey downs. And in the later, crowded years a holiday on the Norfolk coast could bring back "the blessing of finding one's self alive and full of spring."

One passage in his journal describes a day of glorious scenery on the west coast of Scotland, sweeping bursts of sunshine on dark mountains and crags, strange luminous veils of cloud and curtains of rain over the tumbling sea:

"This is the Nature from which we came, to which we return. These are the scenes that might well fill the inward eye in the last hours. We are one with all this—atoms in the wild whirl. Don't let us suffer it to be blotted

out by wearying thoughts about our souls — and their shortcomings. They are not for a day like this. The vision purges us of self."

In this "fortitude of a resolute, open-hearted stoicism," reiterated from his first essays to the last pages of the *Recollections*, Morley lived to the end. The change that came to him was not of opinion but of spirit. What he said of George Eliot was deeply true of himself: "She never withdrew from the position that she had taken up, of denying and rejecting; she stood to that to the end: what she did was to advance to the far higher perception that denial and rejection are not the aspects best worth attending to or dwelling upon." From his denials Morley never withdrew. What he did withdraw, in his revision of his earlier writings, was the note of combat and challenge, the words that, as he realized, had given needless pain to good people. In his own way of life he proved what he had written in *On Compromise*, that "it is certainly not less possible to disbelieve religiously than to believe religiously."

"They call him agnostic, but he lived Christianity," said one who knew. His hostess in Arbroath said to him after he had joined in family worship, "We are quite sure that you are really nearer to us all in religion than perhaps you yourself are aware." [37] And the Countess of Aberdeen tells his answer to her suggestion that he need not come to family prayers:

[37] J. P. Lilley, "Lord Morley and the Montrose Burghs," *Fortnightly*, November 1923.

"He said he would certainly come down, if only to renew his own sense of littleness amid the mysteries of life, and to begin the day with a feeling of fellowship in service with the humblest member of the household." [38]

In his campaign before his first election to Parliament, Morley gave to his Newcastle opponents the answer that was, as the *Recollections* tells us, his last word on this high matter:

"Religion has many dialects, many diverse complexions, but it has one true voice, the voice of human pity, of mercy, of patient justice, and to that voice your candidate, to the best of his knowledge and belief, has always done all he could to listen."

Not far, this faith of an unbeliever, from the religion of the prophet of old: "to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

[38] "John Morley," by a Member of Parliament, *Century*, 36: 874.

# CHAPTER IV

## FREE MINDS IN ACTION: *THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW*

WHAT the *Encyclopaedia* did for eighteenth-century France, the *Fortnightly Review* under Morley did for nineteenth-century England.[1] For it was in the reviews of England that the pioneer thinking of the seventies was done. And it was an unknown young journalist who took over a dying periodical and for fifteen years moulded the mind of Young England.

The story of Morley's first years in London has been told by Mr. Hirst partly from the reminiscences of Morley's Oxford friend Frederick Arnold.[2] Too proud to ask for help from his father after their quarrel, Morley had come down from Oxford about 1860 without honors or influence or income. His own short chapter in the *Recollections* touches but lightly on those Grub Street days. There is one glimpse in a letter written years later to Frederic Harrison: "I was a scrawler when I first came to town — and I have scribbled many a day before now with a hungry paunch, but 'twas all honest and honourable."

And there is more than a little of autobiography in his

[1] J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (London, 1924), pp. 163–4.
[2] Hirst, I, 33–60.

account of Burke's early struggles "in the slippery craft of the literary adventurer." Burke, he wrote, was not fond in after life of talking about his earlier straits, not from false shame but from the sanity that makes a strong man "cast behind him the barren memories of bygone squalor." But Morley's memories were not all barren or buried: in after years he remembered to good purpose the horrors of the Holborn court under the window of his chambers.

A young Oxford man in search of a living had then little choice but journalism. Morley had refused the Church. He tried teaching, both tutoring and a mastership at a public school, but without enthusiasm. But the months he spent with a pupil in Paris were not wasted if they gave him, as Mr. Arnold thought, his knowledge and love of French literature. He tried law; "but I had no prospects or connections, so I only read for a time in chambers, was called, and purchased gown and wig." That, too, was not wasted time, for the training in close thought and clear expression left its mark on every page he wrote. One bit of hack-work that would have amazed the good folk who later abused him for spelling God with a small *g* was some writing he did for his friend Arnold on a history of the Archbishops of Canterbury. Yet it was not just chance or desperation, one feels, that threw him upon journalism: it was, as he said, his political temper, his passion for ideas in action, his exploring mind. He had to meet all the perils of the free-lance writer:

"If his knack, whatever it amounts to, should cease to please, he starves; . . . if the journal to which he is at-

tached changes hands or changes principles or expires, he too may expire. I say nothing of the temptation lurking in these irregularities for men of defective quality to ill-starred Bohemian ways, that waste priceless time, impoverish character, and as often as not spread long trails of overhanging cloud through life."

But his own character, fortified by his Puritan heritage, did not fail. "The way in which he met the difficulties and vicissitudes of his early years with unfailing energy and courage was almost beyond praise," said the friend who helped him through his ordeal. Through sheer strength of mind and will Morley won his place among the makers of opinion.

That remark about expiring journals came from sad experience. There was first *The Leader*, a radical weekly edited by George Henry Lewes. In spite (or because) of a staff including George Eliot and Herbert Spencer, it died, says Mr. Hirst, of dullness and Comte soon after Morley joined it in 1860. The next year he succeeded Frederick Arnold as editor of the mildly conservative *Literary Gazette*. It too died a year later — though not under his charge. Some first-rate reviews in it were probably his; his praise of *Evan Harrington*, at a time when Meredith was hardly read, may have been the beginning of their friendship.

The last funeral came some years later, when Morley had shown what he could do with the *Fortnightly*. From June to October, 1869, he edited *The Morning Star*, a daily newspaper founded in 1856 by Bright and Cobden to

preach the Manchester gospel of free trade, peace, retrenchment, and reform. It had done valiant service in supporting Gladstone against Palmerston, but by 1869 its day was over, and Morley could not save it. As he wrote in its last issue before it was merged with its Liberal rival, it had done its work: it had proved that a penny newspaper could succeed, and it had helped to make the political ideas which had seemed so extreme when it was founded accepted articles of the Liberal creed. Matthew Arnold's ironical lament to the contrary, *The Morning Star* had not shone in vain.

From the failure of *The Literary Gazette* rescue came to Morley in the strange guise of John Douglas Cook, that amazing manager and editor of the *Saturday Review*. Cook had noticed Morley's articles, discovered the writer, and sent for him. From 1863 to 1867 he wrote for the *Saturday* his two articles a week. It gave him regular work, security, and the chance to show what was in him. It was in the *Saturday*'s anteroom that Morley's long friendship with Leslie Stephen began. Thanks to Fitzjames, who had been writing for the *Saturday* ever since it started in 1855, Leslie found a place there as soon as he came from Cambridge to London to begin life over again.

What manner of periodical the *Saturday* was has been told by Stephen and other Victorians and in Mr. Bevington's admirable study.[3] John Douglas Cook, stout, square,

[3] *Some Early Impressions*, pp. 113–31; M. M. Bevington, *The Saturday Review 1855–1868* (New York, 1941).

bull-necked, red-faced journalist-adventurer, was an odd contrast to the amiable, cultivated Anglo-Catholic gentleman, his fellow-proprietor Beresford Hope. Little as Cook knew of literature, he did have so keen a scent for talent that he managed to collect most of the promising young writers in London. Few staffs have been so brilliant as these *Saturday* reviewers, and like Jeffrey's band they laid on the lash with a will. They cheerfully accepted John Bright's name of "Saturday Revilers" and rejoiced in smiting the Philistines. It was this slashing cleverness that gave the *Saturday* its immense success. Its criticism was chiefly negative — Bagehot declared that it had never stood for a single truth or advanced a single high cause; but it did much to create a reading and thinking public.

Stephen and Morley soon became such useful contributors that they were worth a special retaining fee — Stephen says that his was fifty guineas a year and was given by way of a wedding-present.[4] Since they were both far too radical for the *Saturday*'s Anglican and Tory views, they were shut out of theology and politics and kept to reviews and "middles": lay sermons on things in general sandwiched in between the political leaders and the reviews. They certainly covered things in general, for Morley told Mr. Hirst that he was once sent to report one of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts's famous donkey shows. He was probably reminiscing too when he wrote of the reviewer whose week's task was *General Hamley on the Art of War*, a three-volume novel, a work on dainty dishes, and

[4] Maitland, p. 161.

a translation of Pindar.[5] Stephen wrote Lowell that his middles were on such subjects as Parisian Criminals, Pauperism, Dinner Giving, Contagious Diseases, and The Redundancy of Women. He added that he seldom wrote about America because he disapproved of the whole politics of the *Saturday* on that and on most other subjects. Since his opinions were not very saleable, he did not often give vent to them. But "morally I am indifferent honest."[6]

The two young radicals wrote with "a certain happy audacity," and though they never defended the *Saturday*'s policies, they did catch something of its tone. Years later Stephen, looking over the old files, could hardly tell which were his own articles. And in Morley's notorious review of *Poems and Ballads* there was more than enough of smiting and slashing. But his own voice does sound in the essays that brought him the praise of Victor Hugo and the friendship of Mill.

Morley's first two books, anonymous and now hard to find, were collections of his *Saturday* essays. *Modern Characteristics: A Series of Short Essays from the Saturday Review* was published by Tinsley Brothers in 1865. Years afterward, Morley did not want to be reminded of it, although he remembered that Leslie Stephen had liked it.[7] As one reads its wordy, sententious periods, it is hard to believe that they were written by the man who only two years later reached the brilliant, close-knit style of the

[5] "Valedictory," in *Studies in Literature*.
[6] Maitland, p. 163.
[7] Hirst, I, 48–52.

1867 *Burke*. In 1865 Morley was still following after — and a good way after — Addison and Goldsmith. But among such rather labored satires as "Falling Off," such conventional character sketches as "Social Salamanders," one catches glimpses, like the "New Ideas," of the keen mind, the brave spirit, that had brought him out of Grub Street.

Even more completely forgotten was his second anonymous book. *Studies in Conduct*, published by Chapman and Hall in 1867, was withdrawn at once.[8] Perhaps the new editor of the *Fortnightly* no longer cared to see his *Saturday* middles in print. Although I have not found this book catalogued anywhere among Morley's works, no one who read it could doubt that it was his. There are his special phrases, the indignant "as if" that is almost a signature; there are familiar echoes from Mill and Arnold and his own themes, sketches for parts of *On Compromise*. And for final evidence, there are two footnotes quoting passages "by the present writer" from those reviews of *Toilers of the Sea* and *Poems and Ballads*.

As literature, *Studies in Conduct* need hardly be rescued from oblivion. They are moralizings, lay sermons. "Cut him open," said Meredith of his friend, "and you will find a clergyman." But the essays themselves are much less conventional than their titles. "The Capacity for Pleasure" is a vigorous protest against the creed of the

[8] F. B. Harvey, "Two Anonymous Books by Lord Morley," in *Contemporary Review*, December 1927. For telling me of this article and of the copy of *Studies in Conduct* in the Boston Athenaeum, I am indebted to Dr. Warren Staebler of the University of Cincinnati.

truly pious and the truly earnest that anything pleasant must be wrong; "Rural Delights" is a humorous sketch of some idyllic visions of country life with "the poetic cow and the homely pig in the background." Morley's style has moved away from the artificiality of *Modern Characteristics* toward a personal idiom. It is swifter and simpler, with a shrewd wit and a homely Lancashire wisdom that he later too sternly suppressed: "Most of the mischief in the world has been brought about by men with hearts in the right place." As a portrait of the young Morley by himself the little book has a peculiar interest. In his reiteration that character is by far the most important thing about a man, that conduct is the ultimate test of all thinking, Morley is the heir of the Evangelicals. But it is the blend of Hebraism and Hellenism that is the special quality of these essays and of their author. Conduct, he is saying, is many-shaped. It cannot be complete without intellectual vigor, imagination, and the grace that is the full flower of wisdom.

II

In 1865 the *Fortnightly Review* was a bold experiment.[9] Founded by a distinguished group including Anthony Trollope, Cotter Morison, and Frederic Chapman of the

[9] Edwin Mallard Everett, *The Party of Humanity* (Chapel Hill, 1939), gives the most complete account of the *Fortnightly* and its contributors from 1865 to 1874. This chapter was mainly written before Mr. Everett's book appeared. Other sources for the founding of the *Fortnightly* are Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (London, 1883), p. 170 ff.; Arthur Waugh, "The Biography of a Periodical," *Fortnightly*,

publishing house of Chapman and Hall, it was a periodical-with-a-purpose, a venture, as Trollope put it, in freedom of speech combined with personal responsibility. Each writer was to say what he thought and to sign his own name. George Eliot and Frederic Harrison both speak of the new review as a kind of *Revue des deux Mondes*, unlike anything in English, a combined review and magazine with serious articles, poetry, fiction, and reviews. George Henry Lewes was chosen as editor, with complete power but without financial obligation. He probably wrote the prospectus, announcing that the review would seek its public among all parties; that the purpose would be that of aiding Progress in all directions; and that its liberalism would be "so thorough as to include great diversity of individual opinion."

"A senseless notion": that was what an editor and publisher thought in 1865 of a magazine with signed articles. He could not conceive of any policy but that of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's*: that "sacred principle of the Anonymous" that had sheltered the Olympian assurance of Jeffrey's "This will never do," and the virulence of Lockhart's attack on the Cockney School. There had been experiments with signed articles before the *Fortnightly*, but no review committed to this policy had yet succeeded.

And the *Fortnightly* was at first a financial failure.

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October 1929; Janet E. Courtney, *The Making of an Editor: W. L. Courtney* (London, 1930); Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, 1930), pp. 258–60.

Perhaps authors and philosophers do not make the best owners and editors. At any rate, the proprietors carried out their principles, as Trollope said, until their subscribed capital of nearly £9000 was gone, and then sold the copyright for a few hundred to Chapman and Hall. Because the fortnightly issue was not popular, the *Fortnightly* became a monthly but kept what Trollope called its "absurd misnomer." It was not easy to find an editor to take up the task that Lewes, unwell and overworked, thankfully resigned. But when Cotter Morison recommended a young journalist of twenty-eight, a new era began.

"With Morley's hand on the helm," wrote Mrs. Courtney, "fresh vigor begins at once to flow into the *Review*." Morley did keep the *Fortnightly* open, as he said in his "Valedictory," to opinions from many sides; and its original policy would in any case have prevented it from becoming the mouthpiece of a party or a school. But as Trollope himself soon realized, it could not remain "neither conservative nor liberal, neither religious nor free-thinking, neither popular nor exclusive." With such an editor and such contributors as Mill, Bagehot, Huxley, Harrison, and Stephen, the *Fortnightly* was bound to become "an organ of liberalism, free thinking, and open inquiry." Much as Trollope disagreed with some of its views (as on fox-hunting), he generously acknowledged its amazing success: "The periodical has a peculiar tone of its own: but it holds its own with ability, and though there are many who perhaps hate it, there are none who despise it."

To turn the *Fortnightly* in a few years from a failure to a paying property would have seemed success enough to most editors. But to make it for fifteen years both profitable and radical was something of a miracle. What happened was a rare combination of what Matthew Arnold once called the power of the moment and the power of the man. Where Mill had failed in the thirties Morley could succeed in the seventies because the moment had come for fearless discussion of the issues that were shattering traditions and beliefs. He made the *Fortnightly* a liberator of the mind of his time. "What we all have to seek," he wrote to Frederic Harrison in 1871, "is the modification and instruction of the current feelings and judgments of our countrymen. This is the only way to ripen them for change." [10] But not all his radical convictions or crusading zeal could have availed without the persuasive power to win distinguished contributors with small fees, the born editor's instinct for ideas and men. Here is a taste of his irresistible manner:

"My dear Harrison, I declare I don't see why faith should not be kept with a wretched editor, just as it is with a wretched solicitor, or anybody else. You vowed by Humanity, the Grand Être, the Supreme Mother, and all the other capital letters of your faith that you would lead off in January. 'Tis indispensable. . . . I must have it. You must write it. You have three whole weeks. You might beat the Psalms of David in that time."

To which the contrite Harrison replied:

[10] Hirst, I, 188.

"I am the vilest of men and you are the most considerate and encouraging of editors. What a task you must have if you have to bottle-hold all your contributors and keep up their peckers as you do mine." [11]

In the "Memorials of a Man of Letters" there is an amusing digression, a Gilbertian "little list" of the persecutors of an editor: the procrastinating pyrotechnist who is always late; the pestering contributor whose world-shaking article never would be missed; the manuscript-without-paragraphs. Perhaps, Morley urged, "some persons of sensitive conscience may be led to ponder whether there may not be after all some moral obligations even towards editors and printers."

What Morley had done with the *Fortnightly* in a few years was told by one of his contributors. Though he could earn more by writing in the *Saturday* or *Cornhill*, "I value," he said, "the chance of writing for you, because a thing that appears in the *F. R.* is somehow or other more talked about than the same kind of thing appearing elsewhere." [12] Reporting that comment to Harrison, Morley added, "The increase of this kind of influence . . . that's what I mean by success."

III

Fearlessness and independence were the mark of the *Fortnightly*. Some of the most original thinking of the time appeared in its pages. There was, for instance,

[11] Hirst, I, 224–5.
[12] Hirst, I, 288.

Walter Bagehot. His *English Constitution* opened the first number and was followed by *Physics and Politics*; his delightful essay on Crabb Robinson was called by Sir George Trevelyan the best magazine article he had ever read. Bagehot, as Morley affectionately recalled, did not share the enthusiasms or convictions of his younger friends, but his detached realism, his keen ironies, put them on their mettle. Banker, economist, editor, critic, Bagehot has recently been chosen by no less a judge than Mr. G. M. Young as the great — the essential — Victorian: a man who could have been of no other age, with sympathy to share, and genius to judge, its sentiments and movements; a man not too illustrious to be companionable, but one whose ideas took root and are still bearing.[13] His distrust of dogma harked back to Burke; his psychological realism faced toward the future. *The English Constitution* is a study of that still "deferential" England of just before the Reform Bill of 1867; yet many of its sayings, when read in the light of recent events, sound uncannily prophetic, as for instance: "The Crown is a visible symbol of unity to those still so imperfectly educated as to need a symbol."

Perhaps if Morley and Harrison had fully grasped this truth they might have been saved their futile foray in republicanism. That adventure has been so completely forgotten that an English-born correspondent of the *New York Times* has denied indignantly that either Morley or Chamberlain ever had the faintest taint of republicanism.

[13] "The Greatest Victorian," in *The Spectator*, June 18, 1937.

The *Fortnightly* for 1872, to say nothing of the biographers of Morley and Chamberlain, would enlighten him; and the editor of the *New Statesman and Nation*, Mr. Kingsley Martin, has just retold the story in *The Magic of Monarchy*, a brilliant little book that owes more than its title to Bagehot. By 1871 the long seclusion of the Queen had brought her popularity very low; the murmurs of disapproval in the press and in the House of Commons were growing very loud. Protest flared in Sir Charles Dilke's Newcastle speech declaring that England was already practically a republic, followed by his motion in the House for an inquiry into the Civil List. To young radicals the establishment of the Third Republic in France seemed the forerunner of peaceful change at home. "The Republic must come," declared Chamberlain, "and at the rate at which we are moving, it will come in our generation."

This was the moment when Morley persuaded Harrison to write for the *Fortnightly* the two articles (June, 1872, and January, 1873) that were, says Mr. Martin, the peak of this wave of republicanism. In "The Monarchy," Harrison asserted that the ultimate adoption of the republican form "is as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun." Since 1688 England has been a disguised republic, and the disguises are now being stripped off. Harrison's assumption that the Throne was of no political importance has been amply disproved by the publication of Queen Victoria's letters, but when he wrote there was, as Bagehot said, "no authentic, explicit information as to what the

Queen can do, any more than what she does." To the Queen herself Harrison paid respectful tribute; his ridicule was for the "holy mysteries" surrounding her. For the present, monarchy must be accepted as "the social *status quo*." There need be no republican agitation, but there must be a growth of the "republican morality" of the common good.

No wonder that when the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Birmingham in November, 1874, *Punch* published Sir John Tenniel's superb cartoon of "The Brummagen Lion," Chamberlain as Mayor kneeling before the Princess to have his claws clipped, and hiding behind his back a copy of the *Fortnightly*. The motto,

> Has put his red cap in his pocket and sat on his *Fortnightly* article
> And of red Republican claws or teeth displayed not so much as a particle,

is a tribute as much to the *Fortnightly*'s daring as to Chamberlain's discretion at a difficult moment.

Fortunately most of Morley's courage went into more urgent matters. Eighteen-sixty-seven was an exciting year for a young radical editor. For Disraeli, who with the Whig "Adullamites" had just defeated Gladstone's mild Reform Bill, was proceeding to "dish the Whigs" and manoeuvre the astonished Tories into the "Leap in the Dark," the Borough Franchise Bill that almost doubled the electorate and ended the middle-class compromise. And the next year Gladstone defeated Disraeli, won the General Election on the Disestablishment of the Irish

Church, and began his great administration of Liberal reform. While Carlyle was denouncing "the calling in of new supplies of blockheadism, gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash," Morley was impatiently demanding more and quicker reforms, and satirizing the party system and the new-rich Lancastrian voters. From the first he foresaw the greater issues ahead. In "The Liberal Programme" (September, 1867), he hailed the Reform Bill as the first stage in the new revolution, the transfer of power from a class to the nation. He saw that the real struggle had only begun; that a revived Liberalism must move beyond borough franchise to deal with Ireland, labor, education, taxation, justice for the poor. Behind the impatience of these first excursions into politics, the indictments of obstructionists and mediocrities, was a quickening vision of "the tremendous and urgent question" before England, the labor question.

If the *Fortnightly* under Morley had done nothing more than defend the workers it would deserve to be remembered. The chief defender was Harrison, whom Morley came to know the year he took over the *Fortnightly*. Harrison was then living in chambers in Lincoln's Inn, where he and Morley read law and planned the *Review*. Harrison had been called to the bar, studied law under the great jurist Sir Henry Maine, and read much history. But as "a furious radical" and a Positivist he had been more absorbed in good causes: he had joined the Working Men's College and taught there along with Ruskin, Kingsley, Maurice, and Thomas Hughes, and he

had worked hard for Parliamentary reform and Italian liberation. In 1861, after a prolonged strike in the building trades, Harrison became one of a committee of young Positivists and Christian Socialists who undertook to present the unionists' case to the public.[14] "I vowed that night," wrote he, "to do my best to see justice done." [15] He did, and the two brilliant letters to the newspapers which he helped draw up did much to settle the struggle. From that time on this group of young barristers and writers became the trusted legal advisers of the union leaders. "It would be difficult," say Sidney and Beatrice Webb, "to exaggerate the zeal and patient devotion of these friends of Trade Unionism, or the service which they rendered to the cause in its hour of trial." Next to Positivism, said Harrison, the study of the industrial problem became "my main social task." He visited the factory districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, talking with employers and workers; his diary is full of the vivid impressions out of which came his *Fortnightly* articles.

In October, 1866, a gunpowder explosion in a Sheffield workman's house inflamed the growing popular indignation against unionism. The unions themselves joined in the demand for a searching investigation. The Royal Commission of Inquiry was appointed, February, 1867, at a moment when newspapers, politicians, and public opinion were almost solidly against the unions, when by a

[14] Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London, 1902), pp. 229 ff., 247, 253–5.

[15] *Autobiographic Memoirs*, I, 250 ff.

recent court decision unionism had become, as Harrison put it, immoral and a public nuisance like betting and gambling. When he himself was appointed to the Commission as the workers' representative, his father, afraid of the effect on his professional prospects, begged him to refuse. Of course he not only accepted but with Hughes conducted the union case and drafted in the minority report what the Webbs call "the complete charter of Trade Union liberty." By this report, says Mrs. Courtney,[16] Harrison did more than any other one man to bring about the Acts of 1875, in which collective bargaining was at last fully legalized. Both Harrison and his fellow-Positivist E. S. Beesly suffered for their devotion: Beesly almost lost his professorship at University College; Harrison felt forced to retire from legal practice. But they have their reward. For Harrison, life-long worker in the cause of the oppressed, it was success enough to be one of the founders of trade-union law and liberty.

It seems incredible that his *Fortnightly* articles on the unions could ever have been called "incendiary." [17] Citing a Blue Book on child labor that was "one long catalogue of oppression," he argued that against such crying wrong the only organized protection was unionism. Although it alone could not cure these deep-seated diseases, it was still an indispensable safeguard against the increasing

[16] Janet E. Courtney, "Frederic Harrison: 1831–1923," *North American Review*, April 1923.

[17] "The Iron-Masters' Trade-Union," May 15, 1865; "The Good and Evil of Trade-Unionism," Nov. 15, 1865; "The Trades-Union Bill," July 1869, etc.

power and recklessness of capital, the ruin of the workman's life, and the danger of revolution. Appealing for the Trades Union Bill which he had drafted in 1869 he declared: "It is not now unionism which is on its trial, but the good faith of politicians, the fairness of the law, and the representative character of Parliament."

Evidently the editor of the *Fortnightly* had not forgotten the clang of those Blackburn factory bells. One of the first articles he published was the one on "The Social Condition and Political Prospects of the Lancashire Workmen," picturing the miseries of the workers in Morley's childhood.[18] But by 1868 there had been a vast improvement in health and housing and working conditions. The Lancashire workers of the sixties were neither republicans nor revolutionists; if left alone, most of them would be Liberals. Morley's own fine essay on Lancashire, written ten years later, in July, 1878, at the time of a strike that had caused fierce rioting in Blackburn, described the same swift change from the former savagery that he had known. The habit of orderly and disciplined coöperation had now made these rebellious folk "the most indomitable workers in the whole country." Repeating what he had said the year before to the Miners' Association of Hanley, Morley declared that the rise of the workers was the main movement of the century, but their standard of living was being held down by the orthodox doctrines of unlimited competition and cheap goods. This bold claim was answered in the next number by Morley's neighbor W. R. Greg,

[18] See *ante*, p. 7.

who defended cheap labor and even called for a general reduction of wages. In reply Morley printed his address before the Trades Union Congress in Bristol (October, 1878), challenging the "law" of fixed wage rates and the reduction of wages below the level of subsistence. "How much," he asked, "should the workers suffer?"

When an especially unjust sentence was passed on five gas stokers, he burst out to Harrison, "I am so much cut up about the iniquity of Brett [the judge], and the injustices, and the sycophantic press, and the base, bloody, and brutal middle and upper class that I cannot think of anything else and lie awake at nights. I must let my flame forth. It is the worst atrocity in my time." [19]

His protest was more than a flame of anger at "atrocious wrong"; it was a call to the workers to use their new voting power to make such things impossible.

Not only Morley and the Positivists, Harrison, Beesly, and Henry Crompton, but the radicals, Stephen's friend Henry Fawcett and Goldwin Smith, and the economists, W. T. Thornton and Mill himself, were making the *Fortnightly* the most outspoken friend of labor in the years when it desperately needed friends. All of them believed that the improvement of the workers' condition was the most urgent social reform of the time, because, as Morley put it, "the workers are the only set of people who are not a class; they are the nation." Mill's own review of Thornton's *Labour and its Claims* (May and June, 1869), in which he repudiated the wage-fund theory, helped to

[19] Hirst, I, 230–2.

break down the bars of economic "law" against the efforts of organized labor; and his unfinished chapters on Socialism (1879) urged a gradual reform of the abuses of private property while socialistic experiments were being tried. Indeed most of the *Fortnightly* reviewers were following Mill beyond the bounds of *laissez-faire*. But they were not seeking any new or distant country. What they had to do, they knew, was to quicken the social conscience of England, to make Liberalism come alive.

The sharpest test of English Liberalism and the English conscience was the state of Ireland. It may have been the Irish colony in Blackburn, Mr. Hirst thinks, that first stirred Morley's concern for the cause to which so much of his political life was to be given. His 1867 *Burke*, published in the *Fortnightly* in the first months of his editorship, contains an account of the economic miseries of Ireland and an indictment of the tyrannical cruelty of English rule not unworthy of Swift. And in Morley's first visit to the United States in November, 1867, he saw for himself the condition of the Irish immigrants in New York City, driven from home by oppression and starvation to become active enemies of England. His address in Blackburn the following spring on "Ireland's Rights and England's Duties" was a brilliant argument for immediate reform, the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, and an exposure of the state of the Irish tenant, the deepest danger and disgrace to the British Empire.[20] His *Fortnightly* contributors, Cotter Morison and others, did

[20] Hirst, I, 98–9, 121–3, 127–32.

much to prepare their readers for Gladstone's reforms, Disestablishment in 1869 and the Irish Land Bill of 1870. Morley's own fearless fight against the policy of coercion, waged in the *Fortnightly* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, went on until it forced the resignation of Forster in 1882. With Chamberlain he worked out the measures of reform that took shape in *The Radical Programme*. In all his Irish policies from first to last he held steadily to the vision of his fine "England and Ireland," printed in the *Fortnightly* for April, 1881: the task of England is not merely to keep law and order for the moment but to lay the foundations of good and settled government according to Irish needs and desires. Of that grim nemesis of Irish wrongs whose end is not yet he wrote forebodingly:

"Until we have reshaped the whole system of Irish government so as to leave room for an independent and spontaneous growth of Irish civilisation along its own lines, Ireland will remain what she is now, miserable herself, and the torment and despair of others."

It was Mill who raised the question of woman suffrage in the House of Commons in 1867 and who published two years later *The Subjection of Women*, the great plea for their complete liberation. Morley naturally took up a cause so dear to Mill and Meredith; he reviewed Mill's book enthusiastically and translated Condorcet's farsighted argument for the citizenship of women. He did yet more: he opened the *Fortnightly* to the appeals of some distinguished women, the spirited essays of Viscountess Amberly and Mrs. Fawcett on the claims of women and their

educational and political disabilities. It was like Morley to dare to disagree with these feminists by opposing the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act; and, when convinced that he was wrong, to dare to change his mind.

"We must educate our masters." No warning was ever more needed than Lowe's after the Reform Bill of 1867. Of the children of school age, less than a third were in government-inspected schools, mostly belonging to the Church of England; nearly half were in no schools at all. "Our primary instruction," as Morley said, "is wholly inadequate to the needs of a modern society; it is deplorably bad, disgraceful, non-existent." To meet this crying need Gladstone's government produced the Education Act of 1870, a compromise which satisfied no party or sect. It tried to fill in the gaps in the existing system by granting government aid to the Voluntary Church Schools, and by creating local school-boards which could establish new schools where needed. Nonconformists and Radicals, who had joined in the National Education League for "secular, compulsory and free education," now waged a fight to repeal Clause 25, which authorized school-boards to pay the fees of poor children in denominational schools. It was a small issue to split a party, but behind the battle was the vision of a great opportunity lost, a real national system of education.

Into the struggle Morley flung himself and the *Fortnightly*. His series of articles (August–October, 1873), collected in a little book, *The Struggle for National Education*, shows him at the top of his fighting form. De-

claring that the Act of 1870 handed the elementary education of England to the Anglican Church, he attacked the Church as the organ of intellectual bondage and social oppression. But deeper than the question of separating secular from religious teaching he saw the need of a system of education adequate to meet the appalling ignorance of the masses.

Morley's "holy wrath" against the sins of the clergy did not keep him from realizing, as he wrote to Harrison, that he was reproaching "good and kind men who happen to be doing bad things." Indeed he once told his sister that he always got on better with clergymen and pastors than with anybody else. But naturally his plain speaking, along with his crusade for Disestablishment, and what he afterward called "a perfect cyclone of religious polemics," gave to the *Fortnightly* of the seventies an odor of anything but sanctity.

The struggle for national education was lost in the Liberal defeat of 1874, but Morley's part would have been worth while if it had done no more than to bring him and Chamberlain together. His description of Chamberlain in the *Recollections* is still warm with the generous affection of those thirteen strenuous years when "we lived the life of brothers." On his side Chamberlain found in Morley not only an invaluable supporter for the New Radicalism but a friend who became his "chief stay." (The rupture in 1886, Mr. Garvin thinks, hurt Chamberlain even more deeply than it did Morley.)[21] From their

[21] *Life of Chamberlain*, II, 150.

first meeting in July, 1873, Morley saw Chamberlain as the future leader of a united Radical party and joined him wholeheartedly. "Our object just now," Chamberlain wrote him, "should be to state as clearly as possible the programme of the party of the future, and to make a party thereby."

That programme, "The Liberal Party and its Leaders," published in the *Fortnightly* for September, 1873, is, as Mr. Garvin says, one of the primary documents of Victorian political history. Beneath the dazzling commercial prosperity of England Chamberlain saw the workers' deep sense of injustice and wrong. To this, the Condition-of-England Question, his answer was the "Four-F" platform: Free Church, Free Land, Free Schools, Free Labor — a policy for the next twenty years. Here, he saw, was the chance for a new Liberal programme appealing to both Nonconformists and workers: to the former, by Disestablishment and free secular schools; to the latter, by the complete legalizing of the unions and by removing the age-old restrictions on the holding and transfer of land. Chamberlain was too keen a politician to expect the country to support his platform all at once. "This preparation," he wrote Morley, "is your special province." And so, after the Liberal defeat of 1874, the *Fortnightly* carried on with another challenge to complacency, "The Next Page of the Liberal Programme":

"We are compelled," wrote Chamberlain, "occasionally to turn aside from the contemplation of our virtues and intelligence and wealth, to recognize the fact that we have

in our midst a vast population more ignorant than the barbarians whom we profess to convert, more miserable than the most wretched in other countries to whom we attempt from time to time to carry succour and relief."

Through the next ten years Morley worked tirelessly with Chamberlain, in the *Fortnightly* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* and as member for Newcastle, to transform the old Liberalism into the kind of Radicalism that he once called "only Liberalism very much alive." The climax of their campaign was *The Radical Programme*, a series of articles published in the *Fortnightly* under Morley's successor, T. H. S. Escott, from July, 1883, to May, 1884, and reprinted with additions before the General Election in July, 1885. Morley's name does not appear, but he worked closely with Chamberlain, editing, and writing more than one chapter, notably the one on "Religious Equality," which Mr. Garvin calls one of the best briefs for a fighting party.[22] What matters is that he shared its purpose: "the intervention of the State on behalf of the weak against the strong, in the interests of labor against capital, of want and suffering against luxury and ease." The authors well knew that their programme of Free Church, Free Schools, Free Land, taxation of unearned increment, progressive income and inheritance taxes, would "sound the death-knell of the *laissez-faire* system." They even admitted that these measures had a socialist tendency; but they would tax wealth only for the good of the community and would

[22] *Life of Chamberlain*, I, 545 ff.; Hirst, II, 231–46.

preserve in full vigor "all the individual activities of English citizenship."

Whether or not, as Mr. Garvin claims, the beginnings of the British Labour Party may be traced to the "Unauthorized Programme," it was surely a new vision for Liberalism, a bold appeal to the newly enfranchised workers. If only the Irish storm had not parted Chamberlain and Morley, the Liberal Party might for years have been the party of social reform.

The story of the *Fortnightly*'s dealings with foreign affairs, especially with Disraeli's adventures in Imperialism, belongs to another chapter. The difficult years began with the Franco-Prussian War, which split the *Fortnightly* contributors into French and German sympathizers. Morley and Meredith kept the balance, steadily opposing intervention. But it was Morley who was mistaken in his hope that Bismarck would lead Prussia away from the Militarism of Frederick the Great; Harrison who was right in his warnings against a triumphant, militarized German Empire — warnings which he kept on repeating up to 1914. At any rate, as Morley wrote to Harrison, *Fortnightly* readers did not find its politics dull.

## IV

The deepest mark made by the *Fortnightly* under Morley was not on politics or social reform but on rationalist thought. Now rationalism is too often used in Humpty Dumpty's masterful manner of making a word mean just what one chooses it to mean. When, for example, Mr.

A. W. Benn, historian of Victorian rationalism, describes rationalism as "the mental habit of using reason for the destruction of religious belief," [23] he is giving not a definition but a conviction. He has come a long way from the definition of the *Oxford Dictionary*: "The principle of regarding reason as the chief or only guide in matters of religion, or of employing reason to criticize and interpret religious doctrine."

That definition fairly describes the prevailing English attitude from Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* in 1695 almost to *Tracts for the Times* in 1833. For through the eighteenth century, as Mark Pattison and Leslie Stephen showed,[24] religious literature was mainly concerned with proving the truth of Christianity. On the long road between the older rationalism of criticizing and interpreting, and the nineteenth-century rationalism of "destroying" religious belief, certain figures stand out: Hume, quietly denying the power of reason to demonstrate ultimate truths; Voltaire and the *Philosophes*, openly wielding the sword of reason against the dogmas of *L'Infâme*; Shelley, kindling the dry logic of Godwin into flame; James Mill, convinced by Butler's *Analogy* that a world so full of evil could not be the work of a just Creator.

But what turned Victorian rationalists from critics into

[23] A. W. Benn, *A History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1906); J. M. Robertson, *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1929).

[24] Pattison, "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688–

combatants was the blindness and bigotry of the orthodox. Although through the early nineteenth century the new findings of German Biblical criticism were gradually seeping into England in such books as Thirlwall's translation of Schleiermacher (1824) and George Eliot's translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1846), the Church, absorbed in the swift drama of the Oxford Movement, gave little heed. Between the *Vestiges of Creation* in 1844 and *The Origin of Species* in 1859 there was not, says Samuel Butler, "a single book published in England that caused serious commotion within the bosom of the Church."[25] But from 1859 on, the ancient walls of the Mosaic cosmogony and the verbal inspiration of Scripture, already undermined by the critics, were crumbling under the accumulated discoveries of geology and biology. And the defenders of orthodoxy were turning on both scholars and scientists with almost incredible abuse and persecution. Bishop Wilberforce — he who met his match at the famous Oxford meeting of the British Association in 1860 when he begged to know whether Huxley claimed his descent from a monkey through his grandfather or his grandmother — denounced natural selection applied to man as "absolutely incompatible with the word of God." (And now the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Doctrine in the Church of England decides that no objec-

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1750," in *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1860); Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1876), I, 78, 205.

[25] *The Way of All Flesh* (Macmillan, 1925), pp. 221–2.

tion to the theory of evolution can be drawn from Genesis. One wonders which would be more amazed, Huxley or Wilberforce.)

We can hardly believe the invectives heaped on Darwinism by theologians and religious papers: "this anti-scriptural and most debasing theory . . . standing in blasphemous contradiction to biblical narrative and doctrine . . . the vilest and beastliest paradox ever invented in ancient or modern times amongst Pagans or Christians." [26] And we can hardly imagine the panic produced the year after *The Origin of Species* by that "terrible explosive," *Essays and Reviews*. Though its contributors were eminent scholars and divines, including Jowett, Oxford's most famous professor, and Temple, a future Archbishop of Canterbury; though their purpose was simply to say what they thought within the limits of the Church, to reinterpret Christian doctrine in the light of the new criticism and science, and to vindicate free inquiry, they were branded as "the Seven against Christ," and their prosecution was demanded "for the sake of the young, who are tainted and corrupted and thrust almost to hell by the action of this book." Even when two of the Reviewers were exonerated by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the verdict immortalized by the epitaph on Lord Westbury, the Lord High Chancellor:

> He dismissed Hell with costs,
> And took away from the Orthodox members of the

[26] Janet E. Courtney, *Freethinkers of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1920), p. 150.

Church of England
Their last hope of everlasting damnation [27]

the storm raged on. Eleven thousand clergymen, headed by Pusey, signed a declaration of belief in eternal punishment. "Only the secular arm," says Dean Inge, "stopped a whole series of ecclesiastical prosecutions which would have made the ministry of the Church of England impossible except for fools, liars, and bigots." [28]

No wonder that the *Fortnightly* under Morley took up the battle against an orthodoxy that seemed the enemy of science and new ideas. For these young rationalists and scientists were fighting not for the destruction of old beliefs, not simply for the acceptance of new truths, but for the very freedom of the mind to follow truth. In spite of the editor's well-known fearlessness, says Mr. Benn, the *Fortnightly* for the first few years of Morley's editorship seems quite reticent in theology. But as one looks through these volumes, one wonders where Mr. Benn found the reticence; hardly in such language as, "You ask what the common weal demands; he [the theologian] tells you something about the sacred fowls or the Thirty-nine Articles, about sacramental churches, or the aspect of the sacrificial entrails." In a brilliant series of essays by Spencer, Herschel, Tyndall, and Huxley, the *Fortnightly* was showing some of the implications of the new science.

[27] Andrew D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology* (New York, 1903), II, 342–8; T. A. Nash, *The Life of Richard Lord Westbury*, 2 vols. (London, 1888), pp. 73–79.

[28] "The Victorian Age," in *Outspoken Essays*, Second Series (New York, 1927), p. 204.

Indeed it was in his third year as editor that Morley published the essay which made, he said, the greatest sensation of a generation, Huxley's "On the Physical Basis of Life." Yet though Huxley boldly asserted that thought is a property of protoplasm, he refused to bind himself to a deterministic inference: "Fact I know; and Law I know; but what is this Necessity, save an empty shadow of my own mind's throwing?"

In the last six months of 1877, the year named by Mr. Benn as the climax of Victorian rationalism, every number of the *Fortnightly* contained some challenge to orthodoxy: in July W. K. Clifford's "The Ethics of Religion," in August Morley's chapter on Holbach from his *Diderot*, in September Leslie Stephen's "The Scepticism of Believers," in October Cassel's review of Renan's *History of the Origins of Christianity*, in November Tyndall's "Science and Man," and — to end the rationalist year — Lionel Tollemache's "Hell and the Divine Veracity."

In the battle for free thinking there was no more valiant fighter than Stephen. He had been writing not only for the *Saturday* but for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the New York *Nation*, *Fraser's*, and the *Cornhill*, of which he became editor and in which from that time on much of his work appeared. He had, as he said, "stumbled" into literary criticism, and was writing the series of essays that became *Hours in a Library*. And he had found his true spiritual home and was at work on his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*. Of the essays that he sent to the *Fortnightly*, some deal with literature, more with

belief and unbelief, only one or two with politics. In the days when he was among the Young Liberals he had written one of their *Essays on Reform* and even planned a book on political philosophy. But actual politics came to seem to him more and more muddled. ("Parliament wrangles and disputes and talks nonsense and does nothing. There are no leaders and no policy and no common sense," he wrote to Holmes in 1868.)[29] Morley liked to tell how Stephen came to spend one Sunday afternoon at his remote fastness and on leaving casually remarked, "I suppose you have heard that the French army has surrendered at Sedan and the Emperor is a prisoner."[30] Though he never abandoned his Liberal opinions, his political zeal, he said, cooled down. Yet he could catch fire over some moral issue and write with burning indignation of "Mr. Bradlaugh and his Opponents" (*Fortnightly*, August, 1880). "The faith of the future must be founded on unflinching respect for realities." That note of his "Apology for Plain-speaking" is the same that sounds through his friend's *On Compromise*: "Take courage and speak the truth." In 1878, five years after the *Essays on Free-thinking and Plain-Speaking* were published, Stephen wrote to Charles Eliot Norton, to whom the book was dedicated, "I seem to have lived out the whole state of mind in which I wrote the essays."[31] Like Morley in after years Stephen came to feel that he had

[29] Maitland, p. 203.
[30] *Recollections*, I, 118.
[31] Maitland, p. 260.

spoken too vehemently of his opponents, had not done justice to their high motives; he came to see too that "men will always require some religion." But like Morley he had nothing essential to retract. His deeper mind is voiced in "An Agnostic's Apology," printed in the *Fortnightly* of June, 1876, and in the book that bears that name. Like "Wordsworth's Ethics," it was written in the sad days after his first wife's death, "when some random blow out of the dark crushes the pillars round which our life has been entwined." (To that same time belongs the lovely reverie "The Alps in Winter," which with the clear beauty of "The Sunset from Mont Blanc" and the mingled horror and humor of "A Bad Five Minutes in the Alps" gives us Stephen's finest prose.) In "An Agnostic's Apology" Stephen speaks with the deep tones of grief, but from the mysteries of evil and death he could find no escape in revelation. "I would rather face the inevitable with open eyes." When he *was* facing the operation that was, he knew, the beginning of the end, Meredith wrote to him:

"What I most wish for you I know you have, fortitude to meet a crisis, and its greater task, to endure." [32]

Nothing that Morley ever wrote was as hard for him as his review of Mill's posthumously published *Three Essays on Religion*; the notes and markings in his copy of the book show how he labored with his beloved master. Though he only once reprinted part of his *Fortnightly*

[32] *Letters*, II, 537 ff.

articles, he never changed his "strong dissent," repeating it at the last in his *Recollections.* He was arguing, as he said, not with believers but with his rationalist teacher on his own rationalist grounds; for Mill's conclusions seemed inconsistent with his ways of thought, as well as with the whole Positivist scheme of social development by fixed and ordered stages. To be sure, Mill's first essay, "Nature," rejected as irrational and immoral the idea of Nature as a guide for man; and his second "The Utility of Religion," found supernatural beliefs no longer necessary to a religion of duty or humanity; but his third, "Theism," ended with a possible God, benevolent but not omnipotent, a possible hope of immortality, and a possible revelation of God in Christ. Mill's twilight hopes are not indeed a faith to comfort aching hearts. Yet in his noble tribute to the beauty of the life of Christ, in his sense of the burden of humanity and its need of "the feeling of helping God," we can feel the insight, deeper than reason, that made him the Saint of Rationalism.

It was of course on the teaching of Mill that the rationalist critique of Morley and his *Fortnightly* contributors was founded: since all our knowledge comes from experience, they reasoned, we can believe only that of which we have evidence. And what Mill had taught Lyell and Spencer and Darwin seemed to confirm: that the continuity of change excludes miracles; that the supernatural has not been proved. And so, as Henry Sidgwick put it, "what was fixed and unalterable and accepted by us all was the necessity and duty of examining the evidence for

historic Christianity with strict scientific impartiality." Most of them reached the resolute agnosticism which Huxley had named and Leslie Stephen expressed in the ending of his "An Agnostic's Apology": "that the ancient secret is a secret still; that man knows nothing of the Infinite and Absolute; and that, knowing nothing, he had better not be dogmatic about his ignorance." Yet even Clifford, the most utterly negative of them all, who indignantly rejected the "God of injustice" of the old creeds, could write two years before his untimely death of his reverence for the religion of Maurice and Kingsley and Martineau, that "comradeship with a Great Companion" that reaches forward to "a clearer vision that is yet to come."

For these agnostic clergy were always talking not only, as Chesterton said of Huxley, about the religion he hadn't got, but about the religion they *had* got or glimpsed. Their unbelief was not sad like that of their elder brothers Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold; it was never despairing like James Thomson's; it was often vehement, always hopeful, even religious.

Today their rationalist test of all things by evidence and experience seems as inadequate as the mechanistic psychology, the "billiard-ball physics," from which it grew. But unlike their grandsons, these Victorians refused to be bound by the paralyzing implications of their concepts. For they knew that they were more than their chromosomes or their conditioned reflexes; they were rational, moral beings. They had cast off dogmas and creeds, but

they had kept the religious attitude. Their humanism, their belief in the dignity, the "sanctity" (the word is Huxley's) of human nature, was rooted in their fathers' faith that man is the child of God. Like their Evangelical forebears they threw themselves into social reforms and public service; they fought for the education of the poor, for higher education for women, for organized labor and exploited classes and races. Their task, they knew, was to lay the foundation of a religion of the future in "veracity of thought and action and the resolute facing of the world as it is." [33] All of them, like Morley, foresaw "the building up of a creed by which men can live." Mill's last talk with Morley dwelt on that coming victory of the good to which he had given his life. Like those men of old, "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off," these men too looked forward to a faith builded on veracity, justice, and brotherhood.

## V

But the *Fortnightly* under Morley was far more than a radical or rationalist battle-ground. Almost every important writer of its time appeared in its pages, or was recognized and encouraged by its keen, unconventional criticism. In the annals of Victorian literature it stands next to the *Cornhill* under Thackeray and *Fraser's* under Maginn. Meredith, Arnold, Trollope, Bagehot, Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris, Pater — what periodical has held

[33] T. H. Huxley, "Autobiography," in *Collected Essays* (London, 1890).

a galaxy of more shining names? How wide and keen was its concern for art is shown by its reviews and studies, of Ibsen — Edmund Gosse's appreciation of him in 1873 was the first in England — Heine, George Sand, Baudelaire, Wagner, and Walt Whitman.

What Meredith's generous support meant to Morley we already know. Once he even insisted on taking over the *Fortnightly* so that the editor might have a desperately needed holiday. And in the days when Meredith's work was little liked by publishers or readers, the *Fortnightly* printed *Vittoria* (begun in Lewes's editorship), *Beauchamp's Career*, *The Tragic Comedians*, and some of his finest poems, like the "Ode to France."

Of Matthew Arnold's place in his generation, his influence and insight, there is no juster estimate than Morley's in the *Recollections*. To Morley Arnold had been the delightful companion in his own Surrey home; the beloved poet whose verses Morley knew by heart and carried on many a journey. (On the flyleaf of the little book he had written "Read with much fortifying quietude of mind on the glorious forenoon of our departure, on the matchless terrace at Beatenberg, June 12, 1914" — just before the end of all quietude.) And Arnold had been an elder comrade in that war against Philistinism which was part of the greater war for a Liberalism of the future. "I owed him much," said Morley, "and from Oxford days I well knew it." For he saw, what Arnold's critics have not always seen, that the aim of his criticism was deeply social, that he moved from culture, the perfecting of the indi-

vidual, to civilization, "a life worthy to be called human," for the whole body of society. All four of his *Fortnightly* essays are appeals for this social ideal. The "George Sand" (June, 1877) is of course literary criticism, and of Arnold's finest: for he writes of George Sand, not as the judge and divider that he too often tried to be, but with a young man's warm devotion tempered by the clear light of mature understanding. From the lovely memory of his far-off visit to her at Nohant he turns to the spiritual progress that he shared with her: the first romantic agony and revolt, the consolation of nature and beauty, the final faith in social renewal. And here, in George Sand's vision of "the ideal life, which is none other than man's normal life as we shall some day know it," is the refrain that runs through all these essays of Arnold's, repeated in the preface which he wrote when they were published in *Mixed Essays*. For his searching essay "Equality" (March, 1878) he took as his texts Menander's "Choose equality," and George Sand's saying, "The human ideal, as well as the social ideal, is to achieve equality." That essay, with its exposure of the English religion of inequality in its class system and land system, is Arnold's clearest indictment of the economic basis of the ruling social order. The last two essays, the "Porro Unum Est Necessarium" of November, 1878 (not the chapter of the same title in *Culture and Anarchy*) and the "Ecce Convertimur ad Gentes" of February, 1879, an address to the largest Working Men's College in England, are appeals, backed by his knowledge of French education, for a system of public

secondary schools that could civilize the middle class and so eventually the whole community. The four essays illustrate the complex unity and continuity of Arnold's thought, its implications for his day and ours, which Mr. Lionel Trilling's study has stressed.[34] Arnold has needed such critical study, for he has paid too well the penalty for his dexterity. His brilliant sword-play has hidden his deep thrusts, his hypnotic phrases have obscured his insights. We remember the deceased wife's sister and the readings from Eliza Cook, and we forget his prophetic warning: "We are trying to live on with a social organisation of which the day is over."

One might not look for the Pre-Raphaelite poets or the writers of the aesthetic movement in the *Fortnightly*, yet Morley welcomed and appreciated them keenly. One of his first *Fortnightly* reviews was of William Morris's *Earthly Paradise* (June, 1868), and it is full of his delight in forms of beauty so far from his own main concerns. Here is the rationalist editor praising Morris for his very freedom from "the little doubtings, and little believings, and little wonderings, whose thin wail sounds . . . through so much of our current writing." Morris offers us a vigorous and healthy objectivity, a gift of looking freshly and simply on nature, for which "the mind yearns thirstily in broken and turbid times like these." Morley printed several of Morris's poems and translations, and sixteen of the

[34] Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold* (New York, 1939).

fine sonnets of Rossetti's *House of Life*, as well as Swinburne's enthusiastic essays on both poets.

The story of Morley and Swinburne belongs to another chapter: how the young critic whose anonymous review of *Poems and Ballads* in the *Saturday* had led the attack on that firebrand of a book began the very next year as editor of the *Fortnightly* to print Swinburne's work. At a time when the poet most needed such encouragement the *Fortnightly* was giving him an audience. To this chapter too belongs his essay on Pater's *Renaissance*, a penetrating interpretation of the book that so scandalized the devout. Morley never showed more critical discernment than in printing many of the essays, afterward collected in *The Renaissance*, *Appreciations*, and *Greek Studies*, that are the flowering of aesthetic criticism. His own temper was closer to that of another young critic, John Addington Symonds, who wrote for the *Fortnightly* at Morley's request, contributing some of the studies for his masterpiece, *The Renaissance in Italy*. In spite of his knowledge and his charming style, Symonds, says Morley in a letter to Harrison, does not bring his matter into contact with reality as Arnold always does. Yet passages like Symonds's poignant description of the Michelangelo figures on the Medici tombs in San Lorenzo must have touched Morley's own deeper mood that set the Penseroso in his library. And the "stoical mysticism" which Symonds drew from his long struggle with doubt and illness was very near to Morley's own unwavering creed.

## VI

About 1880, J. A. Spender recalled,[35] a relative of evangelical opinions with whom he was staying found in his bedroom a second-hand copy of the *Fortnightly*. Taking it with a pair of tongs, he marched downstairs and placed it on the kitchen fire, with an awe-struck household looking on. Some of the orthodox and conservative burned the *Fortnightly*. Others wrote fiery protests. To the accusation that it was an organ of Positivism Morley replied that most of his contributors were not followers of Comte, but that the *Fortnightly* was the only English periodical except the *Westminster Review* in which Positivism had been treated seriously and had had fair play. One attack which he printed begged him "to cease from teaching the noble class you aspire to lead [the working class] to despise and hate all other parts of this great people; to refrain from attacking wantonly the cherished sentiments of the millions whose belief is not your own; to aid with your powerful pens and tongues our statesmen in the path of progress . . . to construct, instead of teaching only how to destroy. . . ." [36] Morley replied that he had never taught violence or destruction; but that he believed in the worker as a fellow-citizen, and he hoped for a day "when all this talk about classes shall be at an end," when there shall be no privileged orders or creeds. For the Liberal

[35] "John Morley," in *Fortnightly*, December 1938.

[36] "England and the French Republic," in *Fortnightly*, November 1870.

way of reform is not appeal to force but "strenuous and openminded love of improvement . . . and a respect for truth."

When Morley resigned his editorship after fifteen years, he had made the *Fortnightly* not only the most powerful British periodical of its time but one of the first organs of European thought. His last word, his "Valedictory" of October, 1882, is a very modest record of this brilliant achievement. Looking back across the years, he spoke his regret for some hasty, heated words and mistaken decisions; his sorrow for the loss of dear contributors and friends. His two-fold task was done; the policy of signed articles, the popularizing of serious discussion, had succeeded beyond expectation. Yet the change from anonymity to signatures had not led to half the evils, or the advantages, that had been foretold. The new system had its own dangers, as Morley had already pointed out in "Some Memorials of a Man of Letters." [37] But the new freedom in religious debate had raised the whole level of discussion; it had taught more courage and honesty to the heretics, more humility to the orthodox. The success of such reviews as the *Fortnightly* had marked a real revolution in the intellectual habits of the time. It had brought abstract discussion from the serious student to the man in the street. "The clergy no longer have the pulpit to themselves, for the new Reviews became more powerful pulpits. . . ." Thinking had been popularized — a very great change in a very few years. But the editor of the *Fort-*

[37] *Studies in Literature.*

*nightly* too had learned humility. He admitted that what looks like complete tolerance may really be complete indifference. Yet a certain number of people had been persuaded to share the Liberalism of the *Fortnightly*, the new ideas of social and political reform. It had done something to give "freedom and variety to thought, and earnestness to men's interest in the world."

Commenting on the *Fortnightly* under its "eloquent, vigorous, and strictly honourable conductor," Morley's old employer the *Saturday* concluded: "There is no doubt that the editor of the *Fortnightly Review* has contributed to the task of breaking the ice under the feet of society." [38] And a modern critic, reviewing *The Party of Humanity*, Mr. E. M. Everett's history of the *Fortnightly*, has charged that "the chronic crisis which has stretched the nerves of Europe for nearly a generation has one of its origins in the *Fortnightly* liberalism — its uncritical glorification of reason, 'progress,' and humanitarian hope."[39]

To one of these charges the *Fortnightly* contributors speak in no uncertain tones:

"What sort of progress is this," asked E. S. Beesly, "in which the larger part of the community remains as miserable, if not more miserable, than in a state of barbarism?" [40]

"If we continue much longer," declared Chamberlain, "to flaunt our wealth and luxury in the face of a vast

[38] *Saturday Review*, Oct. 7, 1882.

[39] Charles Frederick Harrold in *Saturday Review of Literature*, June 3, 1939.

[40] "The Social Future of the Working Class," March 1869.

population whose homes would disgrace a barbarous country, . . . we shall be startled by abrupt and inconvenient reforms." [41]

Painting the horrors of industrialism as vividly as did Ruskin or Engels, Harrison concluded that although no century was ever so praised as the nineteenth for its material progress, yet the new machinery had brought chiefly misery to the workers.[42]

And Morley, writing of the hideous waste of life in modern industry, went on, "As we sing hymns of triumph to progress, to commerce, to the spread of a trading race over the globe, we are deaf and blind to the cost of so much glory, and forget to measure how little it all adds to the moral stature of men." [43]

If this is glorification of progress, what would warning sound like?

As to reason, it is true that the Victorian rationalists and liberals, being reasonable men, heirs of the European tradition, trusted overmuch in reason, allowed too little for ignorance and folly and fear. But perhaps we have been undone less by their reasonableness than by the distrust and despair of reason that have betrayed the victims of Hitler and Goebbels to the power of the lie.

And if these Victorian liberals hoped too much and too soon, they kept on working to make their hopes prevail. Nor were they blind to darker possibilities. The close of

[41] "The Liberal Party and Its Leaders," September 1873.
[42] "A Few Facts about the Nineteenth Century," April 1882.
[43] "Some Recent Travels," May 1876.

Morley's "Valedictory" points ahead to the grave problems that might prove, he knew, more dangerous than any in his country's history: reform in Parliamentary government and in the conditions of land-holding at home, the ominous effects of imperialist adventure abroad. Some of the causes of these years had been left behind, some of the battles lost. But under him the *Fortnightly* had been a good soldier "in the liberation war of humanity."

# CHAPTER V

## SEEN BY A RADICAL: *EDMUND BURKE*

"THOUGH the obstructionists in Church and State may have their little day, we others have the future." It is the new editor of the *Fortnightly Review* speaking for the Young England of 1867. For a generation of young Liberals, whose prophet was Mill, was coming from the universities. Its purpose, announced in a book of *Essays on Reform* by a group that included Leslie Stephen and Goldwin Smith, was a real Parliamentary reform that should end class rule and make England a true community. And its voice still sounds in a book, almost forgotten but very much alive, that Morley was writing in 1867.[1]

Morley was only twenty-eight when he wrote the study of Edmund Burke that is still, says Mr. Harold Laski,[2] the best general account of him that we have. The *Edmund Burke* is a fine estimate of the great eighteenth-century Conservative. And it is also a stirring statement of mid-nineteenth-century Radicalism.

Morley knew from the first word he wrote just what he was trying to do. In his preface to the *Edmund Burke* he drafted the pattern that was to shape his distinctive con-

[1] *Edmund Burke: A Historical Study.* By John Morley, B.A. Oxon. London. 1867. (Reprinted by Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1924.)

[2] *The Rise of Liberalism* (New York and London, 1936), p. 320.

tribution to Victorian literature, the studies of Voltaire and Rousseau, the essays on Byron and Carlyle. Here is his first sketch for this form, the historical study:

"Biography, in the hands of a man of the requisite capacity and sensibility, is perhaps the very highest form of prose work. . . . The biographer, stripping his subject as much as he can of what is irrelevant and accidental in the surrounding conditions, delights the reader with a fresh and impressive picture of a human character. The writer of a historical study, on the other hand, taking much lower ground, aims not at a reproduction of the central figure of his meditations, but at a criticism of his hero's relations and contributions to the main transactions of his time. This at least is the design of the following pages."

A modest and matter-of-fact design it seems to us who delight in the art of biography. But the young mid-Victorian who had just cast off the Carlylean view of history as a procession of mighty heroes and divine judgments had caught, as he climbed the steep new ways of science, far-stretching glimpses of the laws revealed by Comte and Spencer and Darwin. Morley's interpretations of Burke and Byron as great historic forces, like Maine's *Ancient Law*, Bagehot's *Physics and Politics*, and Leslie Stephen's *Science of Ethics*, were adventures in the rediscovery of old realms of thought. Besides, like all his generation, Morley was deeply moved by the work of George Eliot. Consciously or not, he was following in her path as she traced the laws of moral growth and decay that bound

her characters to the common lot of man. In fact it was in 1866, when he was beginning his study of Burke, that in his review, "Some Notes on George Eliot," he described her novels as illustrations of the laws of character and conduct. When Morley wrote in the *Burke* of "those thousand diverse forces which bear along the successive generations of men as upon the broad wings of sea-winds," he might almost have been echoing the words that George Eliot had just written in *Felix Holt*, the "willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces." And in his later essay on George Eliot, Morley struck again the note that sounds through her work and his: their sense of human lives as "evolving themselves from a long series of antecedent causes, and bound up with many widely operating forces and distant events."

It is hard for us to realize how exciting to mid-Victorian writers was this revelation of law and cause. Yet something very similar has been happening in the recent attempts of critics like the late Ralph Fox, Granville Hicks, V. F. Calverton, David Daiches, and others, to apply Marxist concepts to literature. Turning from psychological and aesthetic approaches to criticism, they are insisting that literature reflects and is itself a product of the changing material world and of human society. But of course this idea of literature as an expression of society is no new discovery; it is at least as old as Madame de Staël and Sainte-Beuve and Taine.[3] And the Victorian critic was

[3] See Mary M. Colum, *From These Roots* (New York, 1937), chs. iv, v.

not bound by his Darwinian analogy as the Marxist too often is by his dialectical materialism; he knew that for a work of art social content is not enough.

Why did the editor of a review that was to lead young Liberals far beyond the Whiggism of their fathers turn back to interpret the great Conservative philosopher-statesman? The reasons lay deep in Morley's temper and training: in that sense of truth having many mansions that he had so early caught from Comte and Mill; in that power to see the other side that was to make him a mediator of ideas rather than a party leader. Indeed it would be hardly too much to say that without Mill's "Essay on Coleridge" Morley's *Burke* would not have been written. For Burke was the father of Coleridge's political ideas. It was Burke's political philosophy, his vision of the national community, as a recent study of his thought has shown,[4] that Coleridge restated and developed in terms of his own Idealism. And as Mill had revived for the Radicals of the *Westminster* the neglected truth of Coleridge, so Morley reinterpreted for the Radicals of the *Fortnightly* the lasting meaning of Burke.

For Morley saw Burke as the great forerunner — not of course of his own Liberal principles — but of the empirical method, the positive, scientific spirit in politics. For Burke knew that politics is concerned "not with barren rights, but with duties; not with abstract truth, but with prac-

[4] Alfred Cobban, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1929).

tical morality." And in Burke's defence of the American colonies Morley saw a forecast of "the utilitarian truth that the statesman is concerned, not at all with the rights of the government, but altogether with the interests and happiness of the governed."

To read Burke so was not to misread him. Morley never made Burke into a mid-Victorian Radical — not even, as Dr. Cobban suggests, into "a Gladstonian who went wrong towards the end of his days." What saved Morley from that error was his historic-mindedness, his aim to see Burke always in relation to his time. In his masterly second chapter Morley sketched the rise of the new movements that were transforming England: the Wesleyan Revival, the Industrial Revolution, the critical thought of Hume and Adam Smith, the gradual undermining of political privilege culminating in the Revolutions of 1776 and 1789. In this "strong, setting current of ideas" Burke had no part; he had no faith in free thought or in government by the people. In his defence of the Constitution, of government by aristocracy, he could not realize, as Dr. Cobban has said, that the rise of the new moneyed class meant the end of the old order and the inevitability of Parliamentary reform. And yet, by his efforts to adapt the established order to the needs of the governed, Burke was unconsciously preparing for the democratic movement that he could not share. In his rebuke of the despotic Parliament that excluded Wilkes, in his defence of America, in his efforts for tolerance and fairer dealing with Ireland, in his struggle against the cruelty and injustice

of British rule in India, in his magnificent doctrine of trusteeship, not exploitation, for subject races, Burke stood for "the forgotten truth that a government exists for the sake of the whole people."

The wonder is that Morley, with all his eager Radical convictions, was essentially right about Burke. For he saw him whole, in his wisdom and strength and in his weakness: his dread of critical thought, his desire to hold fast to peace rather than seek truth, his reverence for things established that blinded him to the abuses of English government, the rottenness of French society. For Burke, as Morley has once for all shown, was from first to last consistent with himself. "He changed his front, but he never changed his ground." When he saw in France a mighty monarchy and an ancient church overthrown, his worship of peace and order became a passion of horror and indignation that made him the leader of European reaction. His pity for the humiliation of a lovely queen wiped out all sense of the sufferings of the peasants. He saw the futility of the Jacobin attempt to rebuild society on abstract rights. He foresaw the breakdown of the Revolution into aggression and terror; but he could not see its real causes or meaning. And so his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, that greatest of political pamphlets, is a mixture of profound insight with sheer ignorance and error. You may look on Burke as the preacher of a crusade against France that drove the Revolution into despotism; or as the saviour of England from threatening danger. Morley was of the first party, but the sternness

of his judgment was perhaps illogically tempered by his admiration. His book ends with Burke's moving words, some of the last he ever wrote, in which he seemed to realize that he might unawares have been fighting against the truth: "If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men." "That return of Burke upon himself" seemed to Matthew Arnold one of the finest things in any literature. It was the last ray of Burke's clearer mind in the deepening shadows of his days.

Morley's own discussion of the French Revolution in this last chapter is not only a brilliant and challenging analysis but the foundation of much of his later thinking. Carlyle's mighty canvas, like Signorelli's grim frescoes of the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of Orvieto, had depicted a vision of judgment on the sins of French society. It was, as Morley later wrote, a prodigy of dramatic and poetic insight, not a sane analysis of complex social causes. Morley inevitably saw the Revolution as Comte and Mill had seen it, as part of a great movement of ideas, an incident "in a great change in man himself." The Revolution was not just negative, for merely destructive movements do not live. It failed, but its failure could not drown the echo of its first hope that "sounded over Europe a piercing trumpet-note." It was more than an administra-

tive reform; it was "a social revelation," an inextinguishable demand for social justice. For the spirit of the Revolution was a veritable religion, "the generous and sublime sentiment of the brotherhood of man."

Here in Morley's *Burke* is the prelude to that grand theme of the first chapter of his *Rousseau*, the revolutionary movement as love of our fellowmen, faith in human nature, search after justice. And on the other hand, Morley's diagnosis of the fatal defect of revolutionary thought, its reliance on abstract rights and social contracts, its "deductive geometric methods," runs like a counter-theme through his *Rousseau*, the "Robespierre," and "A Few Words on French Models." But in Morley's later work his first rationalist over-emphasis on the power of ideas was modified by his growing awareness of the economic causes of social change; he came to see the Revolution with the eyes not only of Comte and Mill but of de Tocqueville and Arthur Young. This modern historic sense of the complex causes behind the Revolution shaped his criticism of Taine's doctrinaire account of its origins: for Taine gave to books and ideas an importance as dissolvents that belonged rather to decayed institutions, incompetent castes, and economic injustices.[5] And in his later English Men of Letters biography of Burke in 1879 Morley anticipates our own judgment. Burke "did not look the state of things steadily in the face": the burning social question, the taxes and imposts, the intolerable burdens of the common people. "It was the removal of

[5] "France in the Eighteenth Century," *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. II.

these burdens that made the very heart's core of the Revolution, and gave to France the new life that so soon astonished and terrified Europe. Yet Burke seems profoundly unconscious of the whole of them."

This 1879 *Burke* is the work of a mature writer. (It was actually Morley's third study of Burke, the second being the article he wrote for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1876.) The last Burke is a model biography on the sober English Men of Letters pattern, its narrative interwoven with background and comment. And the interpretation has in the main held its own. Recent research has of course revised some parts of Morley's account, especially of the Hastings trial. Burke's recent biographer, the Rev. Robert H. Murray,[6] has had access to unpublished sources that bring the early years to life as Morley could not. But on the greater issue of Burke's career the two biographers are at one. They see the faults of temper and bearing that excluded Burke from office and made the great political philosopher an unwise politician. And they see him too as "member for humanity," prophet of the future.

But it is Morley's 1867 *Burke* that is still exciting reading because it was excited, convinced writing. By 1879 Morley the editor had laid stern hands on Morley the crusader. There are a few echoes of the earlier book in the opening and closing pages and some other passages of the later. But those first outbursts of enthusiasm and indignation are gone. The very style is subdued to quieter

[6] *Edmund Burke: A Biography* (London, 1931).

cadences. In 1879 Morley calmly quoted Burke's famous plea for peace rather than truth as an instance of his undying dread of the critical or revolutionary spirit. But the Morley of 1867 had retorted, with the "as if" that was always his battle-cry, "As if every truth that is worth having had not been the source of strife and contest — as if every truth-seeker did not come, not to bring peace but a sword."

For the young Radical could not, even if he had tried, have kept the echoes of 1867 out of his book. The battles over *The Origin of Species* and *Essays and Reviews* had not died away; Colenso had been deposed and excommunicated; Leslie Stephen had resigned his tutorship rather than be any longer bound by the "damnable fetters of the Thirty-nine Articles." Of course Morley saw Burke's resistance to the clergymen's petition for relief from subscription to these same Articles as part of that long warfare. But in the struggle for industrial liberation he well knew what the Wesleyan Revival had done to civilize the workers, to bring new light to "the once blind souls of men and women who had laboured blankly, as brute beasts labour, down in coal mines, in factories, over furnaces and forges, in dank fields, in barren, remote moors" — as they were still toiling in his own boyhood. The note of indignant sympathy sounds through this book again and again: in the descriptions of Wilkes as the peoples' protest against cruel and barbarous laws; of the misery of the Irish peasants and the "diabolical" penal laws of their Protestant oppressors. But there is some-

thing else in this book even rarer than its generous pity and anger: a clear, honest mind grappling with contemporary issues. In 1867 Morley had already defined the task to which he had given himself and the *Fortnightly*, the overthrow of privilege, the setting free of labor. Through the American Civil War he had stood like Bright and Stephen for the unpopular cause of the Union; and the outcome of the war, with the brave endurance of the Lancashire cotton workers during the blockade, had quickened his faith in democracy and his efforts for reform. His treatment of the Irish question in the *Burke* shows him already started on the long road that was to lead him so far. And in his discussion of the duties of British rule in India one can watch him not only consciously trying to formulate a Liberal policy but unconsciously laying the foundation for his own Indian reforms. These pages in the 1867 *Burke* are an introduction to the speeches and the letters to Lord Minto which led to the Indian Councils Act of 1909.[7]

With all its maturity of mind, this 1867 *Burke* is a young man's book: young in its anger against stupidity and injustice, young in its faith in the power of ideas, its hope for the swift coming of a better social order. One reads it today as a Radical's confession of faith, a young man's self-dedication.

In 1867, the year of the Second Reform Bill, Morley's book was little noticed. And in his last years it is not strange that he should have chosen his last and not his

[7] *Recollections*, vol. II, book V.

first study of Burke for the collected edition of his works published in 1921. The 1867 *Burke* had long been out of print in England when Alfred Knopf won Morley's consent to its reprinting in America. When it came out in 1924, the year after his death, one reviewer welcomed it as worthy of a permanent place in the world's political literature and as even more relevant than when it was written nearly sixty years earlier. For Morley's account of the debasing effects of lawlessness and violence on those who practise and those who permit them reads like prophecy as well as history. Because Burke saw that the only sure foundation of representative government is "the judgment and conscience" of the individual, this searching study of the great member for humanity has still something to say to our threatened time.

# CHAPTER VI

## EUROPEAN HERITAGE: THE FRENCH STUDIES

THE earnestness of the Victorians has cost them dear. Because of their manner we have neglected their meaning. Morley's French Studies, his chief contribution to European thought and letters, have suffered for their high seriousness. To appreciate the French Studies today we need to remember why they were written and what they achieved in their own time — to put ourselves back into the stirring seventies.

Nowadays we do not ask our young journalists who are pouring their experiences into print, Hast any philosophy in thee? Sometimes they tell us of their search, more often of their disillusion. But your true Victorian journalist and man of letters, Frederic Harrison, John Morley, C. P. Scott, brought to his profession reasoned, vigorous convictions. (And the tradition has been valiantly carried on into our day by editors and writers like H. W. Massingham, H. W. Nevinson, J. A. Spender, Oswald Garrison Villard.) To Morley, as his one-time assistant on the *Pall Mall Gazette* declared, "a newspaper was simply a pulpit from which he could preach." He was a young man terribly in earnest in an earnest decade when he wrote the French Studies. Of course their tone was excited and, in their first form, all too argumentative. But something of

their faith in man's "improvableness," their hope for a better way of life, stayed with him to the end.

"The stormy antipathies of Thomas Carlyle," declared Frederic Harrison, "have to answer for many a miscarriage of historical justice; but for none more unfounded than that superior air with which he teaches the nineteenth century to sit in judgment on the eighteenth." [1] The "*Sceptical* Century," Carlyle had branded it, the age of "all sorts of *in*fidelity, insincerity, spiritual paralysis." [2] "This whole as yet so boundless concern of French Philosophism will dwindle into the thinnest of fractions, or vanish into nonentity." [3]

Carlyle's familiar indictment was actually the crest of a long wave of reaction in early nineteenth-century England against eighteenth-century thought. Inevitably the violence of anti-revolutionary feeling had discredited the French forerunners of the Revolution. The influence of French eighteenth-century thought on the mind of England, as Edmund Gosse has said, was first combated and then denied.[4] And the Romantic Movement was sweeping a generation of Englishmen away from their own past age; spellbound readers were following Byron and Scott

[1] "A Few Words about the Eighteenth Century," in *Nineteenth Century*, March 1883; reprinted in *The Choice of Books*.

[2] "The Hero as Man of Letters," in *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (New York, 1901).

[3] "Diderot," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (New York, 1900), vol. III.

[4] "The Agony of the Victorian Age," in *Some Diversions of a Man of Letters* (New York, 1919), p. 317.

into realms of far romance; Newman was leading his followers away from Hume and Butler to the medieval Church fathers and saints. To the eighteen-thirties and forties it might have seemed that the eighteenth century was dead and that Carlyle had buried it.

But of course it had not really died. It had lived on in the little group of Benthamites and Radicals, in James Mill, the last of its sons. The young John Stuart Mill had read and reread with "reverential admiration" Condorcet's *Life of Turgot*, "one of the wisest and noblest of lives . . . by one of the wisest and noblest of men." Even in the years of his closest sympathy with Carlyle and the Coleridgeans, Maurice and Sterling, Mill had kept his firm hold on the eighteenth-century side of the truth.[5] And so it was a disciple of Mill who rose up to do battle with Carlyle and to revive the "Bankrupt Century."

In the only piece of self-defence he ever printed, "A Few Words on French Models," [6] Morley replied in 1888 to the political enemies who were using his French Studies to discredit his Liberal policies. He had been accused of finding his models in the heroes of the French Revolution and his methods in the Reign of Terror, in working for Welsh Disestablishment and Irish Home Rule. The Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer had just described him in a public meeting as "the Saint-Just of our Revolution." Morley retorted by quoting Taine's picture of Saint-Just as "a young monster" with "blood calcined by

[5] *Autobiography*, pp. 113–4, 161–3.
[6] *Studies in Literature.*

study . . . a conscience completely unhinged . . ." and gleefully added:

"It is, no doubt, hard to know ourselves. One . . . may have calcined blood without being a bit the wiser. Still, I do not find the likeness striking. It would have done just as well to call me Nero, Torquemada, Iago, or Bluebeard."

As for the French Studies, he went on, they were anything but a defence of Jacobinism. They were written to refute Carlyle's famous diatribes by interpreting the great French thinkers, as Comte and Buckle and Mill had seen them, as champions of liberation and social justice. And for his own political principles, they were drawn from such utterly unrevolutionary teachers as Burke, Austin, Mill, Turgot, and Comte: "what strange sponsors for the 'theories and principles of the Terror'!"

The French Studies, then, are Morley's answer to Carlyle, and something more. They are the reinterpretation of French eighteenth-century thinkers as pioneers of mid-nineteenth-century Liberalism. In the first chapter of his *Diderot* Morley deals with Carlyle's scornful verdict on the *Philosophes*. By Carlyle's standard, "half transcendental and half cynical," Diderot seems small enough. But a saner and more patient criticism measures such figures by their relation to the great forward movements of the world, their work for mankind. Here Morley is using the historic method of his *Burke* to new purpose. For Burke had no direct part in the great forward movements of his time; he was the forerunner of the Conserva-

tive philosophy, the practical, relative method. But these French thinkers were the spiritual ancestors of a part of Morley's own radicalism. When Carlyle wrote, their work might have seemed vain. "But now [1875] that the last vapours of the transcendental reaction are clearing away, we see that the movement initiated by the *Encyclopaedia* is again in full progress." In science and politics and art, the naturalistic, humanitarian faith of the eighteenth century was marching on. To help clear away those vapors of reaction and prejudice, to show to his own generation their Liberal forefathers as they really were — that was the aim of the French Studies.

It was more than a coincidence that while Morley was rescuing the great figures of eighteenth-century France from the scorn and neglect of Carlyle and the romantics, his comrade Leslie Stephen was quietly re-creating the writers of eighteenth-century England. In 1871, the year when Morley was writing his *Voltaire*, Stephen became editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, and it was in the *Cornhill* that he began the long series of eighteenth-century portraits that is his happiest work. For Stephen, who had married a daughter of the *Cornhill*'s first editor, Thackeray, shared that sympathy with the eighteenth century that fills the latter's *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* and *Henry Esmond*. Stephen's sketches of Richardson and Boswell (to whom, he confessed, he owed his first love of English literature), of Horace Walpole and Gibbon, his biographies of Johnson and Pope and Swift, written for Morley's English Men of Letters Series, were

a labor of love and so of real understanding. "When I indulge in daydreams," he wrote, "I take flight with the help of Gibbon, or Boswell, or Horace Walpole, to that delightful period." And Stephen's delight did much to bring that period back to his own age. How he would have welcomed the superb achievements of the band of British and American literary explorers and scholars who in the new collection of Boswell's Private Papers and the complete edition of his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, the new definitive edition of the *Poems of Swift*, are bringing his beloved century to fuller life than ever before!

For Leslie Stephen was himself, as Frederic Harrison called him, "the apostle of the eighteenth century, saturated with its intellectual clarity and its contempt for fanaticism and enthusiasm, and sharing in its limitations and its prosaic ideals."[7] The prosaic qualities come out in his monumental *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876), in which he carried on the study of the Deist controversy begun by Mark Pattison in *Essays and Reviews*. Stephen's masterful exposition of these theological movements, tracing their philosophic origins and touching their reflections in literature, is heavy reading. One feels, as Cotter Morison pointed out in his review,[8] the lack of comparative method, of the perspective and the wider outlook of Morley's mind. But there

[7] "Sir Leslie Stephen," in *Realities and Ideals* (New York, 1908), p. 370.

[8] "Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought*," in *Macmillan's Magazine*, February 1877.

is not only clarity but modernity in Stephen's last word, his Oxford lectures of 1903 on *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century.* (They were actually written in his last illness, read for him by his nephew H. A. L. Fisher, the late Warden of New College, and published on the day of his death.) In viewing eighteenth-century literature as shaped by its audience and its environment, Stephen was foreshadowing the Marxian mode in criticism. And in this last picture of the age he loved one catches the sound of his own voice:

"The eighteenth century, its enemies used to say, was a century of coarse utilitarian aims, of religious indifference, and of political corruption; but, as I prefer to say, was the century of sound common sense and growing toleration, and of steady social and industrial development."

That passage, said Frederic Harrison, is Leslie Stephen's message to our time. Set it beside one of Morley's descriptions of the age in France and you have the difference between the two friends:

"The eighteenth century, . . . was in truth the seed-ground of a new and better future. . . . Amidst all the demolition upon which its leading minds had been so zealously bent, they had been animated by the warmest love of social justice, of human freedom, of equal rights, and by the most fervent and sincere longing to make a nobler happiness more universally attainable by all the children of men." [9]

[9] *Critical Miscellanies*, II, 305.

Stephen, clear thinking and common sense; Morley, "fervent longing" for freedom and social justice. It was of course a difference in temperament, deepened maybe by that difference in the spirit of the two universities which Stephen had so wittily described.[10] Cambridge common sense made Stephen at home in the age of Pope and Johnson; Oxford moral seriousness drove Morley to revive Diderot and Condorcet as allies in his Liberal campaign. Each turned naturally to that part of the eighteenth century to which he belonged. And together they did much to bring back eighteenth-century thought to its rightful place in our intellectual heritage.

II

If the *Edmund Burke* was a strange beginning for a radical journalist, the "Joseph de Maistre," which followed in the *Fortnightly* the next year, 1868,[11] was stranger still. In fact, as Morley remarked in the *Recollections*, the essay gave something of a shock to "the regulation free-thinkers of the *Fortnightly Review*." But he was cheered by George Eliot's saying to a friend that it showed "a quite unexpected improvement in my *Wesen*, or mental disposition"! Perhaps the radicals would have been less shocked if they had realized that Morley was carrying on the task of Mill's "Coleridge," interpreting another great opponent of eighteenth-century thought to the nineteenth-

[10] *Some Early Impressions*, p. 34.

[11] *Fortnightly*, May, June, November 1868; *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. II.

century inheritors of that thought. And the Positivists might have remembered, as Morley did, how deeply Comte was influenced by de Maistre's plans of social reconstruction. Besides, there was Ireland, where de Maistre's theory of papal supremacy was still a very live issue. But behind these reasons for interest in de Maistre there lay, as George Eliot must have known, Morley's own need to see the enemy full against the light, his eagerness "to pick up the fragments of truth and positive contribution, that so nothing be lost."

This truth which Morley found in de Maistre, and which the pre-revolutionary and Victorian Liberals alike had neglected, was nothing less than the value of a common spiritual faith as the basis of the social order. (That was a bold and prophetic assertion for a young radical to make in 1868, in the midst of the breakdown of the old basis.) But de Maistre's attempt to revive the medieval order failed, Morley insisted, because he mistook the main movement of his time: he saw the eighteenth century as "an infamous parenthesis" between the past and future ages of faith, instead of as the seed-time of a better future. Here again Morley is carrying out his idea of the historical study. But already he had given up trying to disengage a man's thought from the personality and the experience that shaped it. And so what stands out in this essay is not Morley's long discussions of de Maistre's doctrines of papal supremacy and divine retribution, but his picture of de Maistre's long years of suffering and endurance which darkened that dire creed of pain and torment.

In the style as well as the handling of "de Maistre" Morley shows greater mastery, though his movement is still weighed down at times by the heavy mantle of Burke's sonorous rhetoric. But in passages like his description of Catholicism as a deep source of spiritual consolation to millions of men, we feel the strength of his later prose, the clearness of strenuous thought, the vigor of controlled feeling.

Turgot, Condorcet, Mill: these were the high figures who, as Morley put it, first placed chart and compass in his hands, the apostles of his faith. And so his essays on Condorcet and Turgot make the first movement of the French Studies, the first statement of the main themes that run through the series. In the earlier, the "Condorcet," first given as a lecture in Glasgow and printed in the *Fortnightly* for January and February, 1870, the color is brighter, the tone more urgent. Morley was bent on rescuing his hero from Carlyle's charges of coldness and scepticism, and perhaps from Sainte-Beuve's hostile criticism. Condorcet, as Morley admitted, was one of those "non-conducting" natures that do not draw disciples. But his deep care for human happiness, his ardent faith in progress, fused the ideas of natural order and of historical cause and effect which he drew from the Physiocrats and Turgot into a creed that became a starting-point for the social philosophy of the nineteenth century. Morley's sketch of his life ends with the moving picture of Condorcet under sentence of death and in hiding, writing his

great book on the progress of the human mind — that "last will and testament of the eighteenth century," Croce has called it — and then going out to die for his faith in his fellowmen.

Morley's daring treatment of Condorcet as a pathfinder of modern thought has been recently confirmed by Professor Schapiro in his *Condorcet and the Rise of Liberalism.*[12] In the light of all the research since Morley wrote, Condorcet stands out, a secondary figure in eighteenth-century thought but an almost perfect expression of its pioneer liberalism in its weakness and its strength: its hatred of religion and of the past, its belief in human reason and goodness. Condorcet's *Sketch*, as Professor Schapiro shows, was one of the first attempts at a history of ideas, a forerunner of Buckle and Lecky, of James Harvey Robinson and Spengler and Pareto. And Condorcet's striking anticipations of some modern social theories made him a prophet of Liberalism.

The "Turgot," written at Mill's insistence, caught some of Mill's devotion to this grave hero of thought. The essay was a long labor, its first part printed in the *Fortnightly* for August, 1870, its last not until May, 1877. "If I know the work and character of any man in history, 'tis Turgot," Morley once wrote to Harrison, and his anxiety to do justice to his subject led him at first into overmuch detail. The essay is far more effective in its final version in the Collected Works, from which Morley cut away whole

[12] J. S. Schapiro, *Condorcet and the Rise of Liberalism* (New York, 1934).

passages and paragraphs of quotation and comment. Yet even in its first form it does make clear the many-sided greatness of Turgot as thinker and doer. His mighty sentence in his Second Sorbonne Discourse, "All epochs are fastened together by a sequence of causes and effects," voiced a creative idea that revolutionized old ways of thought and led to the social philosophy of Condorcet and Comte and Mill. And the frustration of his wise, far-seeing reforms as Intendant of Limoges and then as Controller-General proved that it was too late to save the Old Régime. But Turgot himself was greater than anything he thought or did; and it is his character that shines through all the long essay. The boy who gave away his pocket-money to poor schoolfellows to buy them books was father of the man whose warm generosity equalled his clear intelligence. Not passion nor pity but justice was the keynote of his life. It was this patient, unwearied, unillusioned search for justice that braced the spirit of young John Stuart Mill and fortified Morley when in after years he became, as he said, the intendant of an Irish Limoges with some difficulties of its own.

A very different quality drew Morley to Vauvenargues, the young French moralist who died when he was but thirty-two. Morley's essay, which followed his "Condorcet" in the *Fortnightly* for April, 1870, was evidently a work of love; but he wanted too to show those who reproached eighteenth-century France for its coarseness and shallowness that the same age could produce one of the most winning of moralists. The "Vauvenargues" is, to be

sure, less vivid and memorable than Arnold's "Maurice de Guérin," but it is a fine memorial to a rare and gracious spirit, shadowed yet not conquered by failure and suffering. Vauvenargues himself must have meant much to Morley, for seventeen years later he ended the address on "Aphorisms" [13] given before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution with a tribute to the undimmed serenity and undaunted spirit of Vauvenargues, and with the best known and deepest of his sayings, "Great thoughts come from the heart." ("Yes," Morley would sometimes add, "but they go round by the head.") His own delight in maxims and aphorisms, bits of the wisdom of life, may seem to us a shade Victorian — but he has more than one withering reference to that incredibly popular work so admired by Victoria herself, Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*. Yet because of that delight and of his gift for living we can still find in his own writings what he found so richly in Goethe and others, those luminous sentences that throw a clear light on human ways.

In these first French Studies Morley sounded the notes of all his work as interpreter of eighteenth-century thought. From the brilliant prelude, that chant of the revolutionary gospel of brotherhood in the *Edmund Burke*, he had moved on to a more complex counterpoint. He saw, what later research has proved, that the Old Régime in France was destroyed not so much by political despotism as by its social and economic disintegration. Out of the clash of interests between the old

[13] *Studies in Literature.*

privileged classes and the rising bourgeoisie there sprang the dynamic new ideas of the *Philosophes*: the rights of man, the power of reason, the inevitability of progress. And so in the generation before 1789 there came a swift revolution in ideas and spirit, the "new hunger and thirst after social righteousness" that saved France.

But Morley's estimate of these ideas from which his own Liberalism derived was as sanely critical as it was appreciative. He anticipated modern critics in his analysis of the defects of eighteenth-century thought: its insistence on intellectual progress and denial of moral development; its contempt and hatred for religion. Those political enemies of Morley's who denounced him as a Jacobin and an atheist can hardly have troubled to read the passages in his "Condorcet," "Robespierre," and *Rousseau* which indict the ways of the Jacobin and the atheist. For to Morley, as he once said, "the leading of souls to do what is right and humane is always more urgent than mere instruction of the intelligence as to exactly what is the right and the humane." And those to whom he turned oftenest in life and in books were men and women in whom he found this shining gift.

It was fortunate for Morley that his closest friends saw, behind the denials that shocked so many of his readers, the real purpose of these essays. Harrison wrote enthusiastically after reading the "Condorcet": "It is perfectly admirable. I think it is an absolute model of biography. Do continue these studies. I think you have found your

vocation." [14] And Meredith gave his inimitable blend of generous praise and witty criticism:

"Your Condorcet to my mind an example of your best judicial style, minus the judicial excess of precision (occasionally as from an old maid to an errand boy — so like!). These studies which you put into so noble a shape and impregnate with your full mind will help to bear good fruit in all directions." [15]

When Chapman and Hall published in 1871 the first edition of Morley's *Critical Miscellanies*, including the first French Studies, "Vauvenargues," "Condorcet," "de Maistre," the first two English Studies, "Carlyle" and "Byron," and those early experiments in Positivism and the New Utilitarianism, "Some Greek Conceptions of Social Growth," and "On the Development of Morals," there was some outcry from the righteous. But there was a surprisingly discerning review by Robert Buchanan, the Scottish poet and novelist, author of that disastrous onslaught on Rossetti, "The Fleshly School of Poetry." For Buchanan's independent and unorthodox outlook was near enough to Morley's for real understanding. He seized the meaning of the French Studies as a just vindication of the eighteenth century. Though he labeled Morley the last disciple of Auguste Comte, he added that he "must not be blamed because he is, like many Positivists, over-positive." Though he reproved the aggressive tone of some of the later-omitted passages, he saw the honest

[14] Hirst, I, 161.
[15] *Letters*, I, 203.

hatred of social abuses beneath the attacks. And his own conclusion with its very Victorian phrasing, paints a fine portrait of the young Morley:

"He fights for the Truth, and his motto is of no more consequence than mottoes generally. Hating shams, loving truth and beauty, reverencing almost to idolatry the great and deathless figures of literature and history, compassionating the sorrows of mankind and hating the laws which complicate them, looking forward to a mundane future closely approaching perfection, and feeling that it is only to be reached by virtuous living and high thinking, he is to be welcomed as an adherent to the blessed cause of Humanity. . . ." [16]

III

"The time for understanding Voltaire is at least approaching," wrote Morley in his first number of the *Fortnightly* in a review of Espinasse's *Life of Voltaire*. Buckle, in his *History of Civilisation*, had condemned the ignorance and bigotry of the English attitude toward Voltaire: "Since the French Revolution an indiscriminate abuse of this author has been in England the test of orthodoxy and loyalty." Buckle's own treatment of Voltaire as the greatest emancipator of the human mind since Luther had pointed the way to an understanding deeper than Carlyle's sketch of the "great *Persifleur*." [17] But in 1871, when Morley began his study of the arch-heretic, he was entering on almost untrodden and very perilous ground.

[16] "Mr. John Morley's Essays," in *Contemporary Review*, June 1871.
[17] *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. I.

How eagerly he plunged into his rash adventure he told Harrison in a letter of June, 1871:

"Moreover, a fortnight ago, I was seized, after the manner of poets, with a phrenetic and wholly invincible oestus — to write a monograph — VOLTAIRE. Everything else has vanished from my mind. Night and day I am possessed with him, and I stick to my table like a slave. What a subject!!!" [18]

That swiftness and intensity of creation, the utter absorption in his subject, has shaped the *Voltaire* into a unity and fusion of thought and form and mood unmatched in any of Morley's later work. In the final edition it stands unchanged just as he first wrote it. Of course the book is a portrait with a purpose. Morley was intent not only on his aim of setting Voltaire in his true place among the liberators but on persuading the various kinds of readers whom Voltaire had somehow offended: orthodox Christians, system-makers like the Comtists, even scientists and men of culture. Voltaire, they charged, had no calm breadth of wisdom. "It may be so," Morley answered. "There are moments which need not this calm breadth of wisdom, but a two-edged sword." Indeed the public for whom Morley wrote thought of Voltaire as at best a mere mocker, at worst a very fiend. Today that image lingers only in the hinterland of what Mr. Mencken calls our "Bible belt." To Morley among others we owe it that we can now set Voltaire with Hume and Gibbon, as a recent writer has said, "among the Fathers of the

[18] Hirst, I, 196.

modern Churches." It is Morley's picture of Voltaire, the defender of the religion of humanity, that is reaffirmed by Professor Carl Becker: "Voltaire, sceptic — strange misconception! On the contrary, a man of faith, an apostle who fought the good fight, tireless to the end. . . ." [19]

By one of the ironies of criticism Morley's *Voltaire*, which horrified many of its first readers by its daring anti-orthodoxy, is now charged, by Mr. H. N. Brailsford, author of one of the finest short studies of Voltaire, with "Victorian Puritanism." [20] It is quite true that Morley found *La Pucelle* shocking — but so have others who are not Victorian Puritans (a modern French scholar has called it "a masterpiece of coarse stupidity"). If Morley could not rise to the higher criticism which finds in the triple rhythms of the poem a magic that lifts it beyond morals, he did try to understand it as the expression of one social aspect of its time. The fault of his *Voltaire* is not its Puritanism but its purposefulness: he is more concerned with Voltaire the enemy of *L'Infâme* than with Voltaire the superb artist whose deadly weapon was words. Morley does appreciate Voltaire's inimitable style; he does discuss discriminatingly the tragedies that only students and critics read now but that gave Voltaire his vast fame as the greatest dramatist of his day; but he gives only a few sentences to *Candide*, the climax, as Lytton

[19] *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (Yale University Press, 1932), p. 37.

[20] *Voltaire* (Home University Library, New York, 1935), p. 253.

Strachey has said,[21] of Voltaire's brilliance and of his seriousness, the essence of his maturest reflection on life. Mr. Brailsford himself, with a viewpoint as unflinchingly rationalist as Morley's own (indeed he finds fewer faults than does Morley in Voltaire's attack on theological dogma), does give a more life-like, rounded picture of the myriad-minded Voltaire. That very complexity, those inconsistencies that fascinate and elude us, have tempted Voltaire's biographers to read his life in their own terms. So Morley sees him as the warrior against Catholic theology; Alfred Noyes as a deeply religious man; and Mr. Brailsford as the defender of a middle-class liberalism that won political liberty for itself but avoided economic equality for the workers. But it is only fair to Morley to remember that he was among the pioneers who cleared the air of England of its smug, stifling prejudice; one of the first to see Voltaire as most of us see him now: the incomparable hater of fanaticism and cruelty, a great lover of liberty and humanity.

In his fine opening chapter Morley defines Voltairism as the Renaissance of the eighteenth century, an intellectual liberation from the Catholicism and the tyranny that were strangling French civilization. But Voltaire's power sprang partly (again the theme of the historical study) from the sweep of deep-lying social forces that had so undermined the old order that it began to crumble at his touch. Like Mr. Brailsford, Morley stresses the crucial

[21] *Landmarks in French Literature* (Home University Library, New York, 1912), p. 179.

effect of Voltaire's years in England; he traces the influence on the young Frenchman of English freedom of speech and opinion, of Newton's inductive science and Locke's common-sense philosophy, of the arguments of freethinkers and deists. Nowadays our critics sometimes talk as if they had just discovered the interaction of ideas and social conditions. But Morley's masterly analysis of the different effects of Lockean empiricism in England and in France anticipates them.[22] In England political thought developed from Locke unchecked because it followed and justified the constitutional reforms of 1688; in France this same philosophy was confronted by an unyielding absolutism in church and state that turned it into a mighty weapon of attack. "The average Englishman of the eighteenth century," as Professor Laski has said, "was at peace even when he was at war. . . . But eighteenth century France is a society in ferment."[23] And so it was in France that Locke's doctrine of ideas derived from experience became the foundation of a new social faith.

Like Mark Pattison and Leslie Stephen, Morley realized what English Protestantism had done to create an atmosphere of toleration and to prevent the violent break that took place in Catholic Europe between theological and scientific thought. But his own escape from the Evangelicalism of his boyhood was still so recent that in 1871 he could see the Evangelical revival only as the force that

[22] *Diderot*, I, 178–9; *Critical Miscellanies*, III, 280.
[23] *The Rise of Liberalism*, p. 181.

warped the intellectual growth of England. He was soon to find among the Evangelicals and Nonconformists some of his strongest supporters in the fight for national education, social reform, and peace.

It was far harder too for a young rationalist of the seventies than for a historian today to judge objectively the *Philosophes'* indictment of religion; but Morley's treatment of this to him most living issue is notably fair and candid. He points out both the strength and the weakness of Voltaire's attack on the Catholicism of his day: on the one hand, his piercing scorn of superstition, his flaming hatred of cruelty; on the other, his narrow, literal method, his ignorance of the origins of religion, his blindness to the "diviner mind" of Christianity. Of course Morley's chapter on religion is shot through with gleams of what he calls "the brightness of the rational day," and ends with a plea for his own religion of devotion to humanity. But in the famous passage contrasting the bare, cold, empty deism of Voltaire with the divine compassion of the Christian Church, his deep feeling for the needs and sufferings of men breaks into passionate cadences. No other rationalist, not even Mill, has written so movingly of the faith he refused:

"Will you sweeten the lives of suffering men, and take its heaviness from that droning piteous chronicle of wrong and cruelty and despair, which everlastingly saddens the compassionating ear like moaning of a midnight sea; will you animate the stout of heart with new fire, and the firm of hand with fresh joy of battle, by the thought of a being without intelligible attributes, . . . whose mercy is not as

our mercy, nor his justice as our justice, nor his fatherhood as the fatherhood of men? It was not by a cold, a cheerless, a radically depraving conception such as this, that the church became the refuge of humanity in the dark times of old, but by the representation, to men sitting in bondage and confusion, of godlike natures moving among them under figure of the most eternally touching of human relations, a tender mother ever interceding for them, and an elder brother laying down his life that their burdens might be loosened." [24]

It was in his own thirty-third year that Morley wrote of Voltaire, in rarely self-revealing words:

"He was in the thirty-third year of his age, that earlier climacteric, when the men with vision first feel conscious of a past, and reflectively mark its shadow. It is then that they either press forward eagerly with new impulse in the way of their high calling, knowing the limitations of circumstance and hour, or else fainting draw back their hand from the plough, and ignobly leave to another or to none the accomplishment of the work. The narrowness of the cribbed deck that we are doomed to tread, amid the vast space of an eternal sea with fair shores dimly seen and never neared, oppresses the soul with a burden that sorely tries its strength, when the fixed limits first define themselves before it. Those are the strongest who do not tremble beneath this gray ghostly light, but make it the precursor of an industrious day." [25]

In this grave mood Morley, closing his *Voltaire*, crossed

[24] *Voltaire*, p. 280.
[25] *Voltaire*, pp. 44–5.

what Conrad has called the "shadow-line" of youth. His own course lay clear before him, so to bring back the liberators of the past as to help set free the minds of his countrymen. And, intently as he steered, there came to him, as to other voyagers, "murmurs and scents of the infinite sea."

IV

"Our best modern biography," Harrison exclaimed when the *Voltaire* appeared. (To be sure, he found fault with Morley for not fully expressing his obligations to Comte.)[26] Stephen of course understood it and reviewed it lucidly in *Fraser's*. Morley needed such appreciation to fortify him against the "veteran slasher" of the *Saturday*, or that attack in the Blackburn paper on the recently defeated candidate who now showed what manner of man he was by his "panegyric" of the infidel Voltaire.[27] But there were enough readers like Chamberlain, who read and re-read the book, to call for three editions in seven years. And so on his hilltop overlooking his beloved Surrey downs and old Hindhead, Morley went steadily on with his self-imposed task:

"I wonder," he wrote Harrison, "how you would bear to sit down as I do day after day laboriously reading and more laboriously writing what gains recognition from a tiny public of generous and appreciative friends — of whom you are the chief — and then will very deservedly

[26] *Ante*, ch. II, p. 54.
[27] Hirst, I, 211.

and properly pass away. . . . But somebody ought to tell this stupid England of good and bright spirits like Vauvenargues and the rest, and as I have a taste for it, and nobody else does it, and life is parlous short — why, of course I sit at my table *comme trois diables*. The old Hindhead understands it all; he has a friendship for me, and the steady tenacity with which he lifts his peak into all sorts of atmospheres and winds and lights is my standing encouragement." [28]

In the spring of 1872 Morley had begun the most difficult of his French Studies, the *Rousseau*. Four chapters came out in the *Fortnightly* that fall, and the book was published by Chapman and Hall in March, 1873. Again it was adventurous pioneering. Edmund Gosse, tracing the vicissitudes of Rousseau in nineteenth-century England,[29] has shown how from 1800 to 1835 Rousseau had sunk from the most enchanting to the most despicable of writers, not to be quoted by decent people, not to be read even in secret, seldom mentioned save to be reviled. Two great Victorians, it is true, George Eliot and John Ruskin, were feeling, the one an intense response to Rousseau's genius, the other an intense resemblance to his nature. But until Morley's book appeared, Rousseau had almost vanished from the nineteenth-century English mind.

The first public response to a book that has become a classic was an ordeal to a very sensitive writer. Carlyle

[28] *Hirst*, I, 211.

[29] "Rousseau in England in the Nineteenth Century," in *Aspects and Impressions* (New York, 1922).

indeed spoke warmly of it, Harrison praised it enthusiastically, and Meredith wrote one of his most discerning comments: "You have handled him with consummate mastery: and none can know the trial you have sustained better than he who as I do penetrates to the man, hating this in him, warming to that, alternately, incessantly. . . . I find in the book mastery of every note of that evasive heart, and a power of showing the Heroic coward complete in his contradictions. . . . It is one of the wisest of books." But even such understanding could not make up for the scorn with which Hutton wrote in the *Spectator* of "the vulgarity of some of his ethical judgments," or for the uproar of the hostile critics who seized on Morley's rash "god" as a stick to beat him with. (Morley defended himself to Harrison for writing "god" as an abstract term, but confessed that if he had foreseen all the chatter, he would rather have printed the whole name in capitals.) "Why don't they stone their prophets nowadays as they used to do?" he burst out. "It would be far better than reviewing them."

From the calm perspective of the *Recollections* Morley saw that his *Rousseau* was too long and too argumentative — he cut it rigorously in the final edition. The modern reader would add that the rationalist too often runs away with the biographer. Since Morley wrote, a host of scholars have added new data and documents and thrown new light on many dim places; yet his book is somehow not quite out of date. (Indeed one authority on Rousseau has called it the best study of him in the language.) And

perhaps Morley had one advantage in writing of Rousseau before the modern battle of the books had raged over him: it must have been easier to see *that* object as in himself he really was before Irving Babbitt and Jules Lemâitre and others had made him the author of almost all evil!

Not that Morley quite succeeded in seeing Rousseau steadily. No one of course could read the *Confessions* without hating this, warming to that, as Meredith says. But one agrees with Mr. Hirst that not only Morley's feeling but his viewpoint wavered. His exclamation to Harrison, "Pity is the right mind in which to think of the miserable wretch," shows how hard he struggled against disgust for the rather stern pity that is his prevailing attitude. A modern biographer like Matthew Josephson,[30] with the new knowledge and insight of our psychological training, can treat Rousseau more dispassionately and more understandingly. Yet Morley is no priggish Victorian, for all his shudders. He defended the sincerity and truth of feeling of the *Confessions*, Rousseau's most living legacy, against the vulgar superficiality of the Philistines. And even in what he called "the close and sickly air" of Rousseau's relations with women, Morley divined a moral sensitiveness that showed itself in the heroic constancy of his attachment to Thérèse. Indeed Morley was always fascinated by the complex forces that shape character, whether of Rousseau or Parnell. He would not have been content to denounce the vices — or,

[30] *Jean Jacques Rousseau* (New York, 1931).

in our later manner, "debunk" the virtues — of his subjects. If he could not paint the brilliant portraits of a Carlyle or a Macaulay or a Strachey, he did not oversimplify or distort. His diagnosis of Rousseau's morbid sensibility lacks our clinical vocabulary, but it goes to the root of that tortured life. Morley did see, if not as clearly as we can, the heroic coward in his contradictions.

It is not as a portrait but as an interpretation of Rousseau's seminal influence that Morley's study holds its place. For however one may rate Rousseau, one cannot deny that he was one of the central figures of Europe, that he stamped his revolutionary genius on the generations that followed him. Morley's first chapter defines the new way of understanding life, the simplification in society and religion and art, that was the message of Rousseau, the heart of the French Revolution. Morley's contrast between Christianity and the Revolution is perhaps the best-known passage he ever wrote:

"Faith in a divine power, devout obedience to its supposed will, hope of ecstatic, unspeakable reward, these were the springs of the old movement. Undivided love of our fellows, steadfast faith in human nature, steadfast search after justice, firm aspiration towards improvement, and generous contentment in the hope that others may reap whatever reward may be, these are the springs of the new."

That last is one of the sentences that have made history; for it helped to create the ideal of the nineteenth-century Liberal movement to which Morley belonged.

Morley's treatment of Rousseau's ideas is critical enough. It is easy to show, as he does, the errors and absurdities of Rousseau: the fallacy in the famous thesis of the *First Discourse* that man is naturally good and that by institutions only is he made bad; the travesty of history and science in his mythical state of nature. But the truth of his revolt against the oppression and cruelty around him roused a crusading spirit that has never died.

In *The Social Contract* and *Émile* Rousseau was trying to show a society which would secure his imagined natural freedom and educate his natural man. *The Social Contract* was the book that roused France and shook Europe; its mighty opening sentence, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains," became not only the gospel of the Jacobins but, a century later, the motif of the Communist Manifesto, "Workers of the world, unite! You have only your chains to lose." Morley's long discussion of the origin and effects of Rousseau's great dogma of the sovereignty of the people is admirably clear; but as Mr. Hirst and Professor Ernest Wright[31] both insist, he is unfair in blaming Rousseau alone for ideas that he drew from Hobbes and Locke, and in refusing him the credit for his ideal of a free society. If there is "desperate absurdity" in some of Rousseau's assumptions, there is real wisdom in such sayings as "Obedience to the law that we have made is liberty." Of course Morley is bent on contrasting Rousseau's logic-made Contract with his own

[31] Hirst, I, 261–4; E. H. Wright, *The Meaning of Rousseau* (London, 1929).

empirical theory of government based on man's effort to shape his circumstances. But though he rejected Rousseau's doctrine, he acknowledged his liberating power. For from *The Social Contract* there arose the great ideals of common action and of brotherhood that survived the Revolution they inspired, and that still march on.

If *The Social Contract* seems now a historic landmark, *Émile*, the first expression of democracy in education, seems almost of today. A curious mixture of sense and nonsense, one feels, but on the whole the sense prevails. Morley's chapter on *Émile* sounds rather stiff and formal, partly because he is using a psychological vocabulary that we have discarded, and partly because he knew so little about children. He does succeed in weeding out Rousseau's nonsense, his artificial schemes of discipline, his mental and moral subjection of girls, his failure to train the social conscience. But Rousseau's great legacies to modern education: the development of the whole personality, not the forcing of the mind; the learning by activity and experience, not by rote and precept, have made him the father of Pestalozzi and Froebel, of Montessori and John Dewey. For all its faults *Émile* is still a charter of the freedom of childhood.

The part of *Émile* that so stirred its first readers and that most concerned Morley was the famous Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar. Compared with the negative deism of Voltaire this faith was an emotional experience that lived on in the post-revolutionary religious romanticism of Saint-Pierre and Chateaubriand. Though Morley

admits the value of Rousseau's creed in keeping religious emotion alive in a tolerant faith, he rejects that faith as mere egotism and complacency, "a rag of metaphysic floating in the sunshine of sentimentalism." Again he is pleading for his own belief, his hope of a time when "those instincts of holiness, without which the world would be to so many of its highest spirits the most dreary of exiles, will perhaps come to associate themselves less with unseen divinities, than with the long brotherhood of humanity seen and unseen."

The key-word of this sentence, the note that vibrates so strangely through this rationalist's words on religion, is *holiness*, "deepest of all words that defy definition." Again and again that word sounds through his thinking. Voltaire, he says, had no sense of holiness, "the soul and life alike of the words of Christ and St. Paul." Even Mill left out this spring of religion, this feeling as independent of morality "as a poem like Shelley's 'Skylark' . . . or a piece of ineffable, heart-searching melody by Beethoven or Handel." And in one of Morley's last essays, his review of Harrison's edition of Comte's *New Calendar of Great men*,[32] he answers Harrison's definition of religion as summed up in Duty by turning, as Arnold often did, to Thomas à Kempis for the secret of this indefinable quality:

"Duty does not cover nor comprehend it. Duty is more, and it is less. . . . Is not the sphere of these famous meditations [the *Imitatio*] the spiritual rather than the moral life, and their aim the attainment of holiness rather

[32] "A New Calendar of Great Men," in *Critical Miscellanies*, IV, 144.

than moral excellence? As, indeed, another writer under the same head better expresses it, is not their inspiration 'the yearning for perfection — the consolation of the life out of self'? By Holiness do we not mean something different from virtue? It is not the same as duty; still less is it the same as religious belief. It is a name for an inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul, by which, though knowing of earthly appetites and worldly passions, the spirit, purifying itself of these, and independent of all reason, argument, and the fierce struggles of the will, dwells in living, patient, and confident communion with the seen and unseen Good."

In a characteristic last sentence Morley adds, "But we are being drawn into matters that are too high for a mere *causerie* like this, and far too high for the present writer either here or anywhere." But he has already let us see, what those who knew him guessed, the mystic hid behind the rationalist.

A memorable passage in the *Confessions* tells how Rousseau's glimpse of the French peasant hiding his food, for fear of the tax-collector, sowed in his breast "those seeds of inextinguishable hatred which have since grown up in my heart against the oppression these unhappy people suffer, and against all their oppressors." And Rousseau's writings have gone on sowing the seeds of inextinguishable passion for the redress of social wrong. That awakening to the sufferings of the people is the theme that runs through Morley's *Rousseau*, and the book did something, as he afterward knew, to quicken the social sympathies

of his own generation. Even now his study of that perturbed spirit, symbol of so much strife, can remind us that "It was Rousseau who first in our modern time sounded a new trumpet note for one more of the great battles of humanity."

## V

Morley's only study of one of the great Revolutionary figures, his "Robespierre," [33] grew naturally out of his *Rousseau*, for Robespierre was Rousseau in practice. The essay treats Robespierre, as does his latest biographer,[34] as the embodiment of Jacobin doctrine and of the Revolutionary spirit. It is no such unforgettable portrait as Carlyle's "Sea-green Incorruptible," but a firm, unsparing, estimate, anything but Jacobin in sympathy, of the "pitiable incompetence" of a leader so hated and so idolized by posterity. Meredith, kindest and keenest of critics, praised Morley's growing power and pointed the way to greater mastery: "The 'picturing' of Robespierre seems to me the best that could be done in prose; sober, acute; the mind being all round him while the finger is upon him. You do not condemn, do not apologise for him, you explain him: and also the time. The critical and the narrative power now go well hand in hand. A little further predominance to the latter, will make yours the finest of historical styles. . . ." [35]

[33] *Fortnightly*, August, September, November 1876; *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. I.

[34] J. M. Thompson, *Robespierre* (2 vols., New York, 1936).

[35] *Letters*, I, 265.

The third of that great eighteenth-century trio, Diderot, had neither the magic of style nor the strange power of personality that have stamped the figures of Voltaire and Rousseau on the imaginations of men. Yet of the three Diderot was the thinker, versatile, original, creative. And more than all the others of his time he was, as Lytton Strachey has said, the *Philosophe*, universal, inquisitive, sceptical, hopeful, humane.[36] His mind was always feeling for explanations, though it could not reach conclusions. His speculations and experiments in drama and fiction, in literary and aesthetic criticism, in economics, applied science, and theology, made paths to the future. He threw out anticipations of later scientific and social discoveries; he hinted at evolution, at relativity. At every turn of thought we still come upon him; and recently published collections of his writings have proved again the variety and vitality of this genius whom Morley rediscovered for his generation.

*Diderot and the Encyclopaedists* was published in 1878 after more than three years of work and research carried on in the midst of Morley's work for the *Fortnightly*, the English Men of Letters Series, and a new edition of all his writings. The *Diderot* itself was undertaking enough, for it included not only the voluminous works of Diderot but three contemporary books that belonged to the Encyclopaedist movement, Helvétius's *L'Ésprit*, Holbach's *System of Nature*, and Raynal's *History of the Indies*. These hardly known books seemed to Morley worth recalling

[36] *Landmarks in French Literature*, p. 162.

because they were part of the *Philosophes'* search for a new basis of thought and morals. It was, as Professor Becker's brilliant essay "The Dilemma of Diderot" [37] has pointed out, a search doomed to failure; for their naïve philosophical materialism could not account for consciousness, still less for the moral purposes of their own lives. Yet modern critics confirm Morley in seeing these writers as forerunners of his own utilitarian and humanitarian Liberalism. Mr. W. H. Wickwar's study shows Holbach,[38] who so horrified his first readers, as a man with a "mania for doing good to humanity," a firm grasp of psychological and moral principles. In fact, as a reviewer has put it, "Holbach's ideal citizen bears a strong resemblance to those high-minded and philanthropic Victorian Liberals who, like himself, had the good fortune to live in an age of high hopes and intellectual expansion, and to die without witnessing the ensuing chaos of war, revolution, and catastrophe."

In tone and treatment the *Diderot* differs markedly from the *Voltaire* and *Rousseau.* There is still some plain speaking about "the shifting sands and rotting foundations of theology," but there is almost no argument — and what there was at first is left out of the last edition. There is even the rather surprising admission, which cuts the ground from under so much of the rationalist attack, that supernatural belief can never be demonstrated from natural or rationalistic premises. The "odious" side of some

[37] In *Everyman His Own Historian* (New York, 1935).
[38] W. H. Wickwar, *Baron d'Holbach* (London, 1935).

of Diderot's stories and dialogues is faced; but it was no Victorian prig who translated, for the first time in English, most of that masterpiece of dialogue, *Rameau's Nephew*, and discussed it keenly and candidly — if not as enthusiastically as Lytton Strachey. And in the *Diderot* there are no Positivist pleas, no trailing clouds of relative clauses, none of the long rhythmic cadences of the deeply moved passages in the earlier books. The style has evidently been "trimmed," as Meredith advised; it is terser, swifter. There is a very modern tone in such comments as, "By this time his wife's virtues seem to have gone a little sour, as disregarded prudence and thwarted piety are wont to do." Because the *Diderot* covers so much ground it lacks the concentrated unity of *Voltaire*; because its manner is objective it does not touch the depths or heights of parts of *Voltaire* and *Rousseau*. Morley no longer argues or exhorts or appeals. What he does give in this last of his French Studies is his clearest, strongest statement of the case for the eighteenth century, and its meaning for the nineteenth.

That case is stated as against Carlyle in the first chapter,[39] and most fully in the long chapter on the *Encyclopaedia*, the great symbol of the new scientific and social ideas of life that were replacing the old theological explanations. Morley's story of Diderot's dauntless persistence under delay and danger and persecution sets him where he belongs among the heroes of our civilization. For, as his enemies quickly saw, the *Encyclopaedia* was

[39] See *ante*, pp. 131–2.

not only a summary of the new knowledge, especially in physical and applied science; it was the manifesto of the *Philosophes'* war against superstition, the programme of liberating reform. As Morley put back on his shelves this mountain of volumes that neither he nor anyone else would often open again, they seemed to him, he wrote, like the gray and crumbling walls of an ancient stronghold, whence a band once went forth to strike a blow for humanity and truth.

"That human nature is good, that the world is capable of being made a desirable abiding-place, and that the evil of the world is the fruit of bad education and bad institutions": that was the moral of the *Encyclopaedia*, the faith of the eighteenth century. From that faith Morley believed that every social improvement since then had sprung. His own heritage of faith was reshaped, not only by the pragmatic political thinking of Burke and Mill, but by his active experience. It was a much more realistic creed that he stated in "A Few Words on French Models," his answer to his accusers: that political truths are always relative to time and place; that reforms must be gradual; that governments and social systems depend ultimately on whatever is the strongest power in society. His high example of these principles at work was "the sage, the patient, the triumphant action of Abraham Lincoln in the emancipation of the negro slaves."

Yet though Morley admitted the "too eager tone" of the French Studies, he could still defend their essential truth. And it is his view of these eighteenth-century Frenchmen

as pioneers of modern thought that has prevailed. His French translators and critics have long since seen the value of his work, "a sort of comparative history of the philosophic and religious thought of the two countries," as one of them has said.[40] For, more than any of his English contemporaries except Matthew Arnold and Lord Acton, Morley expressed the European mind now so shattered. If part of the value of his French Studies has, as he foretold, passed with the generation for which they were written, there is left the outline of that liberal, civilized way of life that we are fighting to save and share.

[40] Filon, Introduction to *Essais Critiques* (Paris, 1895).

# CHAPTER VII

## *ON COMPROMISE*: A TRACT NOT ONLY FOR THE TIMES

THE American college student who said the other day that Morley's *On Compromise* should be required reading in every college and university must have found something that mattered greatly to him in a book written in 1874. If that surprises us it may be that we have been used to thinking of the nineteenth century as T. S. Eliot, for instance, describes it, as " an age of bustle, programmes, platforms, scientific progress, humanitarianism and revolutions which improved nothing, an age of progressive degradation." [1] But Morley, who was then very much alive, knew those years from 1860 to 1890 as "an animated, hopeful, interesting, and on the whole, either by reason of, or in spite of, its perpetual polemics, a happy generation." And he added, "Only those whose minds are numbed by the suspicion that all times are tolerably alike, and men and women much of a muchness, will deny that it was a generation of intrepid effort forward."

It all depends, evidently, on where you stand and what you look or don't look at. To talk of programmes that improved nothing is distinctly *not* to look at the enormous improvement in the condition of the workers since Vic-

[1] *Selected Essays: 1917–1932* (New York, 1932), p. 342.

toria's accession, or at the great series of political and social reforms that marked the twelve years of the Gladstone and Disraeli governments of 1868–80. The point is that the intrepid effort forward was at least as real as the progressive degradation; that the protest against complacency was just as Victorian as the complacency.[2] (In fact you can label the Victorians complacent only by leaving out most of the greatest and the most Victorian: Carlyle and Mill and Dickens, Arnold and Ruskin and Morris.) For, Chesterton to the contrary notwithstanding, Mill also was among the prophets.[3] It was Mill who wrote that memorable chapter "On the Probable Futurity of the Labouring Classes" in his *Principles of Political Economy*, and those searching passages in the *Autobiography* that are still so far ahead of us. And from one of the spiritual sons of Mill came *On Compromise*, a book that was even more than a ruthless exposure of Victorian insincerities;[4] a book that reaches across the years with a new vitality and urgency.

II

*On Compromise* grew from one of those glorious arguments that resounded through the seventies. In 1873 Fitzjames Stephen published his *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, a smashing attack on Mill's *Liberty*. How Morley and

[2] W. R. Inge, "The Victorian Age," in *Outspoken Essays*, Second Series.

[3] G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London), p. 37.

[4] H. H. Asquith, *Some Aspects of the Victorian Age* (Romanes Lecture, 1918).

Harrison dealt with Stephen we shall soon see. His book sent Morley back to the *Liberty*, which he knew almost by heart before he left Oxford. Now he traced Stephen's argument line by line with pen in one hand and Mill in the other. And he ended, as he wrote to Harrison, "simply amazed at the shallowness, roundaboutness, muddledness of Stephen's treatment of Mill's position. I don't say that position is impregnable. On the contrary, I find fault with it. It is vague; it is not perfectly defended. But Stephen misrepresents it — and yet at bottom accepts it." [5] In "Mr. Mill's Doctrine of Liberty," printed in the August *Fortnightly*, Morley set down his step-by-step analysis of Mill and refutation of Stephen. His discussion of the concept of liberty, reprinted as a note to the *Compromise*, is as candid as it is clear. Morley saw, as we do, the weakness of Mill's distinction between "self-regarding" and social conduct. But he saw that Mill was simply using this practical distinction as a basis for protecting the individual from the tyranny of the majority. And he argued that Mill's reliance on the free, self-disciplined mind was a better way than Carlyle's cry for obedience to the hero-dictator, or Stephen's appeal for coercion. Today we know, as Mill could not, how long and hard is that way, how beset by foes, by profit and power, by fear and hate. But Mill's great plea for the freedom of man's mind has taken its place with Milton's mighty *Areopagitica* and Locke's valiant *Letters Concerning Toleration* in our undying heritage.

[5] Hirst, I, 251.

*On Compromise* was a continuation of that high argument for "the moral courage of the mind," a set of variations on a theme by Mill. It opens with a ringing declaration of the gospel of liberty, the right of thinking freely and acting independently. When, then, Morley asks, does this accepted right become a positive duty? What are the limits of compromise in the three fields of thought, speech, and action?

But Morley's essay was shaped in stress of spirit far deeper than debate. In the sharp anxiety of his wife's illness, the sudden sorrow of Mill's death, Morley had wrestled with the dark angel. Through 1874 he was writing not only *On Compromise* but his long review of Cassel's *Supernatural Religion* and his searching criticism of Mill's *Three Essays on Religion.* The minor chords that sound through the essay: "the merciless vastness of the universe of matter sweeping us headlong through viewless space; . . . the wail of misery that is for ever ascending to the deaf gods; . . . the little tale of the years that separate us from eternal silence" — are not just echoes of Lucretius, or cries of despair like *The City of Dreadful Night.* They are calls for unwavering courage to all those "who have made up our minds to face the worst." It was not simply the arguments but the passionate undertone of *On Compromise* that so stirred the young men of the seventies.

To turn from Mill's *Liberty* to Morley's *Compromise* is to leave the high, clear air of philosophic discourse for the more fitful light of common day. It is the greatness of the first part of *On Liberty* that it does overtop the

contemporary and command the future. Mill himself foresaw that its teachings would have their greatest value in the day when some new social order should come to replace the old and to dominate men's minds. "And it is to be feared," he added prophetically, "that they will retain that value a long time." [6] For Mill's "crisis of middle age," the disappointment of his first hopes, had left him only stronger and more fearless than before. He saw that the reforms for which he had worked and from which he had expected so much had brought but little improvement because they had not changed the bases of men's opinions and beliefs.[7] And so, without illusion or despair, he went on developing his more "heretical" ideas on the future of the workers and of women. Unflinchingly he gave himself anew to the unending task of remoulding men's ways of thought. But Morley was concerned not so much with the distant ends as with the instant needs of "transition in the very foundations of belief and conduct." "The old hopes have grown pale, the old fears dim; strong sanctions are become weak, and once vivid faiths very numb. . . . Conscience has lost its strong and on-pressing energy, and the sense of personal responsibility lacks sharpness of edge." In the very beat of the monosyllables, the strong rhythm of the phrases, there is a stress and impact that is lacking in Mill's slow, stately style. And behind the different accent of Morley there lay a new emphasis, an attitude closer to our own than to Mill's. For Morley's

[6] *Autobiography*, p. 254.
[7] *Autobiography*, pp. 238–9.

question of the limits of compromise was one, he insisted, of time and circumstance. His concept of liberty, never as an abstract entity, always as relative to the social situation, is as modern as Mr. Harold Laski's; but Morley would not, as our new Marxian nurses do, throw out the baby with the bath. Because he realized the strength of economic motives, he knew that a *laissez-faire* liberty, an absence of restraint, was no longer enough; that a time of shifting values cries out for clear thinking and resolute conviction.

Moreover, Morley took the step that Mill never took: he re-stated the argument for liberty of thought and speech and act in terms of evolution. For society can develop only if new ideas and experiments can be freely discussed and, as far as possible, tried. And so the compromise that adapts new ideas gradually to old conditions is necessary; but the compromise that suppresses new ideas is perilous. That main motive of Morley's thinking finds in the *Compromise* its full expression: liberty can live only by the unfettered mind, the effort and devotion of those who care deeply for their fellowmen.

*On Compromise* begins with an indictment of the age as piercing as any that Arnold or Ruskin or its later critics ever wrote. England had lost her generous enthusiasm: "What great political cause, her own or another's, is England befriending today?" Even scientific truth was reduced to political tests: the *Times* had severely criticized Darwin for publishing *The Descent of Man* while the Paris Commune was terrifying the owners of property.

This dominance of selfish and material aims over those which are generous, far-reaching, and spiritual was lowering the whole level of national life: the mental climate had become "a shrinking deference to the *status quo*." Morley's analysis of the causes of this mood of ignoble compromise belongs partly, but not wholly, to the seventies. We should hardly think of blaming the abuse of the historic method for our wavering convictions. But the mind of Morley's generation (one apologizes for repeating) was so shaped by the new ideas of natural and social evolution that in their discovery of the origins of customs and ideas men forgot to ask whether the customs were useful or the ideas true. If evolution or the historic method explains everything, courage and will seem irrelevant. (Substitute Freudianism for evolution and you get the modern version.) Morley's protest, his insistence that truth and values matter more than origins, is not yet out-of-date. As to the chief forces that were weakening the mental and moral nerve of the seventies, one of them, the immense rise in prosperity, no longer endangers us. All of us seem safe for a long time from flood-tides of profits or flowery beds of ease. But the other movement of the seventies, the ebb of spiritual certainties, is not yet spent. Morley saw the towers of ancient strongholds crumbling — he had helped to bring them down. He saw the State Church of his time still a barrier to the full freedom of conscience and of thought, "a political army of obstruction to new ideas." But he believed that religion would be again, as it had once been, the moving force of men's

lives. And he was sure that the new faith would never come except to free spirits in their "search for the highest verities."

Because *On Compromise* does deal with the issues of its day there are parts of it that we have left behind. Indeed the second chapter, "Of the Possible Utility of Error," is mostly a parenthesis. Its theme, that error is inevitable but never useful, grew from Mill's saying in his great chapter "On Liberty of Thought and Discussion": "The truth of an opinion is part of its utility. . . . No belief which is contrary to truth can really be useful." Morley pressed Mill's argument, not against real believers, but against the Fitzjames Stephens, those who no longer believe in hell but "think hell a useful fiction for the lower classes." His masterly dialectic no longer stirs us because it is based on the rationalist assumptions of the seventies: that religious dogma is necessarily error; that reason and evidence are sufficient tests of truth. But in this same chapter are words that every writer or reformer might well learn by heart:

"Hence the truly important object with every one who holds opinions which he deems it of the highest moment that others should accept, must obviously be to reach people's general ways of thinking; to stir their love of truth; to penetrate them with a sense of the difference in the quality of evidence; to make them willing to listen to criticism and new opinion; and perhaps above all to teach them to take ungrudging and daily trouble to clear up in their minds the exact sense of the terms they use."

And beneath the logic there burns the intense conviction that flames in those words of Whateley's that Morley put upon his title-page: "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or the second place."

Again, in the fourth chapter on Compromise in Speech, the only questions discussed are those of religious conformity. Should a child conceal his unbelief from his parents, a husband from his wife? What of the priest who has lost his faith? Of the man who hides his heterodoxy for fear of losing his public influence? Morley's answer is that the only relationship in life that justifies silence is that between a son or daughter and the parents who would be deeply hurt by their child's unbelief. As to the man who must hold his tongue or lose his living, we must not judge. But the Victorian husband — who usually contradicted his wife and insisted on his own way in every other matter — could not make her happy merely by pretending beliefs he did not hold. Morley's remark that women are at present far less likely than men to possess a sound intelligence because they are excluded from the best literary and scientific education and from public work, could happily be left out of his last edition. But his saying that what hurts marriage is not difference of opinion but discord of spirit and aim still goes to the root of the matter. And if some of the questions of this chapter seem no longer real, we might ask as he did how much of our tolerance is just indifference?

Yet this chapter contains some of Morley's most moving

words; not only his candid confession of unfaith, but his fine prophecy of a religion of the future that shall interpret the ageless truth of Christianity, "that sovereign legend of Pity," in terms of our own hunger for Justice.

For *On Compromise* is more than a tract for the times. Through Morley's dealing with the issues of his day there shines a spirit that is not for his day alone. In the final version there are words and sentences omitted or subdued, but no jot of meaning is changed. The tone is no longer challenging, but the conviction is no less firm. The theme stands clear above contemporary controversies: in action, the compromise of patience may for a while be necessary; for the sake of others one may sometimes keep silence; but in thought there can be no compromise without deadening the moral sensitiveness in oneself and in the community. For the men who have done most for the world have thought not of their influence but of the light they were seeking. And what better can a man do than to set an example of faithful and fearless dealing with his own conscience and with his fellows, to live his own life in the daylight? Against the easy habit of compromise Morley sets that "sharp sense of personal answerableness" to God or man or conscience that has held the noblest spirits steadfast "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." Against the lighthearted neutrality that evades conviction he sets the duty of patient, fearless thinking. In his plea for "the courage of facing unexpected truths" Morley is in the great succession of Milton and of Mill.

III

"The little book," said its author, "was probably needed, for it found much acceptance and made a long impression." That is a modest description of the book of which Meredith wrote, "you have said what no one else dares or can say" — a book that raised the whole tone of political and religious thought in England. It was translated into German under the formidable title *Überzeugungstreue*, and even found its way to India. One reviewer complained that the only "compromise" in it was in its title. And one cannot help asking how far Morley's own later career fulfilled his high demands. It is true that, like greater statesmen, he found politics "one long second-best"; that in action he did sometimes compromise. Like Burke he tested his political methods by expediency; but he based them on those larger expediencies that are principles. His policy as Secretary for India, as Lytton Strachey has said,[8] was that of an opportunist — but an opportunist of the school of Burke, not of Walpole. H. W. Massingham in his fine memorial essay [9] insists that in the great issues Morley's life record stands clear and steadfast. In its reflection of a character shaped by fearless thinking, of "the intellectual self-respect and strenuous self-possession which the clamor of majorities and the silent yet ever-pressing force of the *status quo* are equally powerless to

[8] "A Statesman: Lord Morley," in *Characters and Commentaries*.
[9] "Morley the Humanist," in *Fortnightly*, November 1923.

shake," *On Compromise* is indeed, as Professor Harper has called it, "the moral portrait of the author." [10]

Of course this fearlessness provoked an outcry. In the *Recollections* Morley gleefully quotes a resounding indictment of himself as "a writer who pretercalmly, subsilently, super-persuasively, but subtly and potently, is exercising influence on the most advanced and most earnest thought of the present generation; who by a refined destructive criticism is solving the faith of thousands, is not contributing an iota to the reconstruction of a systematic body of thought." But we know that there were young men of the seventies, like young Edward Grey, who caught the fire of Morley's ardor and courage, and turned to him with a truly "devotional" sympathy. One of them, later a canon of the Church of England, wrote to Massingham:

"In my life history Morley has meant so much that I cannot weigh him and his work in just balance. I owe him too much. His *Compromise* marked an epoch in my mental and moral development, and in many ways he seemed to me more Christian than the average Christian."

But in the late Victorian years of Socialist agitation and Imperialist adventure it was inevitable that Mill and Morley should be swept aside. Morley himself watched the change, saw even his own generation, as he told Gladstone,[11] grow bewildered, disenchanted, convinced that liberty "matters little either way."

[10] George M. Harper, *John Morley and Other Essays* (Princeton University Press, 1920).

[11] *Life of Gladstone*, III, 475.

That bewilderment and disenchantment went on growing through pre-war dissension and post-war disillusion. In the rising clamor for economic security, liberty was left unguarded. Only when through war-weariness and the desperation of peoples, through the weakness of the democracies and the might of the dictators, one nation after another has lost its freedom, have we learned in blood and tears how much liberty matters. Now that our civilization is in mortal peril, we see that it is rooted in liberty, that history itself, in Croce's great phrase, is the story of liberty.[12] In the midst of men's sufferings for freedom, the creative spirit that gives meaning to our lives, *On Compromise* has become more than an outworn tract. For Morley knew that the unending fight for liberty begins in our own homes and in our minds. Against the surrender to force and falsehood, his warning sounds clear: that every needless act of coercion strikes at the conscience of the community; that they who from whatever motive tamper with veracity are undermining the very foundations of a free society. *On Compromise* lives as the portrait of an unembittered, unillusioned spirit; a dateless plea for the integrity and the freedom of man's mind.

[12] Benedetto Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty* (London, 1941).

# CHAPTER VIII

## ART AND THE RATIONALIST: MORLEY AS CRITIC

THE essential and fatal weakness of the Victorian Age," Lytton Strachey once remarked, was its incapability of criticism. For, to the Victorian critic, "literature was always an excuse for talking about something else." [1] Perhaps the trouble was not so much incapability as a failure in self-criticism, a variety of aim and diffuseness of form, reflecting a conflict of mind. It is true that almost all the Victorian critics did talk about other things besides literature, about politics and history, society and art and religion. They were literally amateurs, lovers of literature. As literary critics they sometimes seem to us deplorably casual and unprofessional, but they had the amateur's zest and freshness and delight. They did tend to be, as T. S. Eliot has said of Arnold, "so conscious of what, for him, poetry was *for*, that he could not altogether see it for what it is." [2] But just because literature was for them a mode of living intensely, their best criticism, though it lacks an explicit metaphysical or psychological theory, has the integrity, the originality of a whole view of life.

[1] "A Victorian Critic," in *Characters and Commentaries.*

[2] *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (Harvard University Press, 1933), pp. 111.

In the criticism of Morley there is both the vigor and gusto of the Victorian amateur and his own sureness of purpose. For his literary criticism grew naturally out of his historical studies; the kind of criticism that he defines in the essay on Byron is the kind that the author of the 1867 *Burke* and the French Studies would inevitably write. Since art, he explains, is the imaginative expression of the ideas of its time, the greater masters come to us with the size and quality of great historic forces, for they represent the hopes and energies of the human mind in its mightiest movements. For these we need synthetic criticism, which, after analysis has shown the peculiar qualities of form and treatment, shall collect the results of the first process, construct for us the poet's mental figure in its integrity, and finally trace the relations of his ideas to the thought-currents of his age.[3]

Nowadays in our reawakened concern with the criticism of values we can understand Morley's idea of synthetic criticism as a fresh attempt to see the object in itself and in its setting. Not all poets, he knew, could be treated in this fashion; the writers with whom his own criticism dealt were actually great historic forces, and could be so interpreted. One does not go to Morley for the sensitive awareness, the close analysis of poetic quality, of imagery and rhythm and music, that our finest critics give us. Morley, like Arnold and even Pater in his own so different mode, was at heart a moralist. One is not surprised to come upon "criticism of life" in one of his first essays,

[3] *Critical Miscellanies*, I, 210.

the "Notes on George Eliot"; or to find him praising Arnold because he never made the mistake of seeing literature as "an end in itself, apart from life, conduct, and character. . . ." [4] But Morley's was too independent a mind to be bound by Arnold's formulas. And he belonged to a generation that was no longer trying to reconcile old creeds with new insights, but was accepting the insights as ways to fuller understanding. What saved Morley's criticism, as indeed it saved Arnold's, was his realization that literature mattered, and that it mattered not just as meaning but as literature.

Although the early criticism of Morley is naturally shaped by his positivist and rationalist concepts of the laws of history and the science of society, he never tried to formulate any laws of literature or a science of criticism. Indeed it was the art of Sainte-Beuve, the great "naturalist of souls," that Morley admired, not the "scientific" system of Taine, whose rigid formulas for explaining French eighteenth-century philosophy he had brilliantly demolished. And although Morley and his fellow-rationalists were eagerly absorbing and defending the idea of evolution, they did not rewrite their criticism in biological terms. To be sure, John Addington Symonds wrote an essay "On the Application of Evolutionary Principles to Art and Literature," [5] but there is a vast difference between his experiment with a metaphor of organic development and dissolution which was, he knew, *only* a

[4] *Nineteenth Century*, December 1895.

[5] In *Essays Speculative and Suggestive* (London, 1907), vol. I.

metaphor, and the thoroughgoing logic of Brunetière's *L'Évolution de genres.* For the English critics wisely concluded with Symonds that "criticism is not of the same nature as science."

That very rationalist critic Leslie Stephen (so rationalist that he read *Wuthering Heights* "with even more pain than pleasure or profit") shows how moderately and sensibly the Victorian critic was applying the scientific and historic method. Of course the short essays in which we hear the tones of his own voice, the *Hours in a Library* and *Studies of a Biographer,* are mainly biographical, seeking, as he said, to know the human being partially revealed in his work. But in his massive histories of ideas the interaction of ideas and conditions is increasingly stressed. The introduction to the *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876) observes that no explanation of these contending creeds can be complete without taking into account the social conditions which determined their reception. In *The English Utilitarians* (1900) the tenets of these thinkers are linked with their social class and environment. And *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1903), is a study of the changes in literary form produced by the rise of the new middle-class audience.

In one vital matter, its repudiation of Victorian prudery, Morley's criticism is superbly un-Victorian. His description of the Great Britain of 1870, "a country overrun and corroded to the heart . . . with cant and foul mechanical

hypocrisy,"[6] is worth quoting if only to prove that the recently popular pastime of hitting the Victorians was begun by the Victorians themselves. It was not left to us to discover the "most unlovely leanness of judgment" which Puritanism produced. Morley's criticism is one long protest against "the crude and incessant application of a narrow moral standard, thoroughly misunderstood." "As if all this had anything to do with criticism proper," he exclaimed over the immense (and not exclusively Victorian) concern with the details of Byron's private life. Morley's perception that it is no more the essential business of a poet to be a teacher than it was the business of Handel, Beethoven, or Mozart[7] seems a commonplace to us, but it put him in his day on the side of the angels. And when he seized on sterility of thought as the weakness of Victorian poetry he was well before his time.

But there was one exception. That very youthful, horrified review of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, with its "libidinous laureate of a pack of satyrs" and the other outraged epithets, has recently returned to haunt its author. Indeed Mr. Osbert Sitwell, in his preface to *Victoriana*, a symposium of Victorian absurdities, declares that Morley lives only as the author of calumnies upon a great poet, and denounces him in language almost as strong, if not as picturesque, as Morley's about Swinburne.[8] Of the three

[6] *Critical Miscellanies*, I, 182.

[7] *Studies in Literature*, p. 25.

[8] *Victoriana*, edited by Margaret Barton and Osbert Sitwell (London, 1931), p. 21.

reviews that appeared simultaneously on August 4, 1866, Morley's anonymous attack in the *Saturday Review* was the one that mattered; it led the greatest outcry ever raised over any book of English verse. Edmund Gosse asserted that Morley not only changed the fortunes of that particular volume — it was withdrawn next day by the publisher and transferred by Swinburne to a less reputable one — but caused a prejudiced conception of the poet from which he suffered all his life.[9]

The review that, it has been said, created the immorality of *Poems and Ballads* begins by admitting that it is of no use to scold an artist of such power and individuality as Swinburne or to preach him solemn little sermons on virtue. "If he were a rebel against the fat-headed Philistines and poor-blooded puritans who insist that all poetry should be such as may be wisely placed in the hands of girls of eighteen, and as fit for the use of Sunday schools, he would have all wise and enlarged readers on his side." But there is all the difference between vindicating real passion or the grand old pagan idea of Joy and depicting "the spurious passion of a putrescent imagination." Instead of the sober and restrained beauty of Greek poetry, Swinburne riots in the most violent colors and the most intoxicated ideas. Fascinating as is the music of his verse, it is often carried not by the flow of thought but by the swing of words alone. There are splendid pictures and

[9] *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (London, 1917); Harold Nicolson, *Swinburne* (New York, 1926), ch. vi; C. K. Hyder, *Swinburne's Literary Career and Fame* (Duke University Press, 1933), ch. ii.

lovely melodies in his poems. But even his best mood has no true awe or reconciliation, only a crushing, iron-shod despair. "Never have such bountifulness of imagination, such mastery of the music of verse, been yoked with such thinness of contemplation and such poverty of genuinely impassioned thought."

Here is Victorian criticism, but it is Victorian with a difference. Compared with the smugness of Robert Buchanan's "Fleshly School of Poetry," its indignation is intelligent. If Morley's language had not been so violently alliterative — it was the "libidinous laureate" phrases that stuck — Mr. Sitwell might have discovered the essential sanity of his criticism. For Morley felt the power of those glorious rhythms that swept the young men of 1866 off their feet. But he sensed too the artistic defect that critics like T. S. Eliot and John Drinkwater have analyzed: the rush of sound that swallows the sense, the word uprooted from the object, the iteration uncontrolled by inner form.[10] And he was right about the poverty of impassioned thought.

Nowadays we do not denounce the impish exhibitionism of certain of the *Poems and Ballads*; we diagnose it. But in 1866, when Freud was ten and Havelock Ellis seven, there was no science of sexual abnormality. Nor could a critic have known, what M. Lafourcade has traced,[11] the influence of Monckton Milnes's collection of erotica and

[10] "Swinburne as Poet," in *Selected Essays*; Drinkwater, *Swinburne* (London, 1924).

[11] Georges Lafourcade, *Swinburne: A Literary Biography* (New York, 1932).

especially of de Sade in stimulating Swinburne's abnormal tendencies. We find the "sadistic jingle" of "Dolores" a little absurd and more than a little boring. We contrast Swinburne's artificial "raptures and roses of vice" with the deep reality of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* — if Swinburne had known anything about Vice or Sin, says Mr. Eliot, he would not have had so much fun out of it.[12] And for Swinburne himself the theme was quickly exhausted; as he said, "the impulse failed."

Morley never joined in the cry of blasphemy over the "Hymn to Proserpine." And so he should have recognized Swinburne as a rebel, a child of Shelley and Blake. Through the smother of Victorian piety and idyllic sentimentality *Poems and Ballads* ripped like a tornado; and young Morley, so soon to become a rebel too, might have felt its exhilarating power. Most of all he might have seen the glory of those two poems in which intense experience, the rejection of Swinburne's one love, is shaped into the poignant music of "A Leave-taking" and the irresistible sweep of "The Triumph of Time."

Of course Morley did not create single-handed the baleful legend of *Poems and Ballads.* That was already begun by Monckton Milnes and the other well-meaning friends who had aroused expectations of a scandal. The British public was ready to be shocked, and would have been even if Morley had not written a word. But it was his scorching word that burned the legend into the middle-class mind. The pity of it is — and Morley came to feel it —

[12] *Essays Ancient and Modern* (New York, 1936), p. 66.

that for once he was on the side of the fat-headed Philistine.[13]

But the rest of the episode is just as Victorian. For when at the end of the same year Swinburne was introduced to Morley there grew up between them a friendship as firm as if that review had never been, although Swinburne had already learned its authorship.[14] From the first number of the *Fortnightly* under Morley Swinburne became a regular contributor, and for some years he published little elsewhere. It was the *Fortnightly* that first printed the famous "Ave atque Vale," many of the *Songs before Sunrise*, and the fine series of critical essays, including those on Morris, Arnold, and Rossetti. Swinburne's letters to Morley are proof enough of his appreciation, and one can wish that something of his magnanimity had descended on all those who have revived the story.

II

There was nothing Philistine, however, about Morley's attitude toward the Victorian Laureate. While the British public was revelling in the *Idylls of the King* and Macaulay was weeping over the parting of Launcelot and Guinevere,[15] Morley was writing in 1869 of the idylls for drawing-rooms: "The ethics of the rectory parlour set to sweet music, the respectable aspirations of the sentimental curate married to exquisite verse, the everlasting glorifi-

[13] Gosse, Letter to *Times Literary Supplement*, Oct. 20, 1923.

[14] Lafourcade, Letter to *Times Literary Supplement*, July 1, 1926.

[15] Amy Cruse, *The Victorians and Their Reading* (Boston, 1935), p. 198.

cation of domestic sentiment in blameless princes and others, as if that were the poet's single province and the divinely-appointed end of all art, as if domestic sentiment included and summed up the whole throng of passions, emotions, strife, and desire. . . ." [16] It is true that this irreverent passage is omitted in the final edition, and that the same essay speaks of the "ordered and harmonious presentation of a sacred mood" of *In Memoriam*. But the comment on Tennyson in Morley's essay on Byron — narrow in subject and feeble in moral treatment, but peerless in the exquisitely imaginative art of his descriptive touches — pierces far beyond the opinion of 1870 to our own evaluation of the imperfect thinker, the great lyric poet.

Of the other great Victorian poet Morley had a word to say that stirred discussion and gave real pleasure to Browning himself. For Morley's interpretation of *The Ring and the Book*, published (1869)[17] more than a decade before the Browning Societies arose to revel in the poet's obscurities and make "his plain places very crooked," [18] has been called by a modern scholar the most notable in grasp, judgment, and expression of all the contemporary reviews.[19] To realize its boldness we have to put ourselves back among those pained and puzzled readers of 1868 who found *The Ring and the Book* murky, sordid, and ugly. Compared with some recent poetic murk, Browning's may seem to us almost luminous, but

[16] *Studies in Literature*, p. 256.
[17] *Fortnightly*, March 1869; reprinted in *Studies in Literature*.
[18] Cruse, p. 202.
[19] W. C. DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (New York, 1935), p. 305.

his readers had had no such exposure. In defending against the Victorian moralist the quickening power of creative art, in testing *The Ring and the Book* by its treatment and not its subject, in finding in it the beauty of its own integrity, Morley had moved ahead of many of its readers. And those who think of Morley only as the assailant of "Dolores" should notice that in 1869, years before the critics had discovered "Modern Love," Morley was quoting Meredith's poignant lines:

> Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
> When hot for certainties in this our life!

To be sure, Morley's purposefulness finds him out when he discovers the "lesson" of *The Ring and the Book:* "The whole poem is a parable of the feeble and half-hopeless struggle which truth has to make against the ways of the world." But a lesson, however "positive," is not enough, he knows, unless it is expressed in poetic and dramatic terms. Morley is well aware of Browning's defects, "harsh and formless lines, bursts of metrical chaos," lack of concentrated poetic quality; but the strength of the poem outweighs all that. A modern reader, too, may still find in *The Ring and the Book* the power of a deep irony and a deep sense of human kinship, wrought into "a single, rich, and many-colored web of art."

### III

Morley's companion essays on Byron, the great poet of revolution, and Carlyle, the great seer of reaction,[20] belong

[20] *Critical Miscellanies,* vol. I.

to his creative year, 1870, when he wrote the "Condorcet" and the "Vauvenargues," and began the "Turgot." In this pair of essays Morley is trying, as consciously as was Arnold, to lift English criticism out of the provincial and the conventional, and to set his subjects in the main movement of European thought. He has learned to keep the historic method in its place, using it to build up his main figures, to show where they belong and what they mean. So he treats Byron as the poet of a transitional revolutionary movement, speaking in the midst of spent forces; Carlyle as the reaction to Voltaire, the deliverer from Byronism, the inheritor of Coleridge and of Goethe. The essays are full of a young man's scorn of stupidity and hatred of injustice: the England of Byron's day was driven by the profligacy of the Regent further into "domestic sentimentality of a greasy kind"; the England of Carlyle's was "a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, a hell for the poor." Most of all they are full of a young man's religious sense of the eternal struggle of unnumbered human souls, and of devout obligation and service to one's fellowmen.

It was a daring thing in 1870 for a young critic to pass judgment on the mighty Carlyle. The "rugged old hero" was still living in Chelsea, where Morley afterward visited him, but his work was done. "The golden Gospel of Silence is effectively compressed in thirty fine volumes." Morley's essay (*Fortnightly*, June, 1870) begins with a fine tribute to the prophet who had kindled the moral ardor of a generation. It was Carlyle, moreover, as later critics

have agreed, who saw, and made others see, the social dissolution and anarchy of the age, who had awakened men to the urgency of the "Condition-of-England Question."

But there was another side of Carlyle's influence. There was the negative view of the eighteenth century that Morley had already set himself to refute. And deeper and more dangerous was Carlyle's exaltation of emotion over intelligence and the scientific attitude. For "the writer who in these days has done more than anybody else to fire men's hearts with a feeling for right and an eager desire for social activity, has with deliberate contempt thrust away from him the only instruments by which we can make sure what right is, and that our social action is wise and effective." Morley, we know, was no defender of *laissez-faire* economics; he had seen it used too often to justify greed and exploitation. But Carlyle's invectives against the "Dismal Science" could not build a better social order. The author of *Sartor Resartus* had attacked the hollow shams of government, religion, and literature, but his solution was impotent. Indeed his gospel of work and renunciation had already been adopted by the masters of industry as a creed of getting on. Morley's answer to Carlyle is the gospel of *On Compromise:* "We need light more than heat; intellectual alertness, faith in the reasoning faculty, accessibility to new ideas."

Worst of all was Carlyle's confusion of success with right, of victory with justice. In Morley's protest against the hero-worship that exalts force and scorns the masses

of men there is the beginning of his own long warfare against militarism. In 1870 Carlyle's idolatry of the soldier seemed to Morley to stand against the movement toward a higher international morality. How could he then foresee the time when Carlyle's strong man would come in sinister guise into his own?

From Carlyle Morley turned back to the great poet of the Revolution whom Carlyle had banished. For Carlylism, "the male of Byronism," had delivered men from the Byronic mood of despair and rebellion by its teaching of labor and reverence. Because Byron was the poet of doubt, denial, and weariness, he could not, Morley admits, keep his hold on our imaginations. "If, however, it is impossible that Byron should be all to us that he was to a former generation, . . . this is no reason why criticism should pass him over, nor why there may not be something peculiarly valuable in the noble freedom and genuine modernism of his poetic spirit, to an age that is apparently only forsaking the clerical idyll of one school, for the reactionary mediaevalism or paganism, intrinsically meaningless and issueless, of another."

In spite of that characteristic thrust, Morley's "Byron" (*Fortnightly*, December, 1870) is on the whole less original and memorable than his "Carlyle." His approach is less direct. He is evidently working out two of Arnold's *aperçus:* the remark, in "The Function of Criticism," that Byron and Wordsworth had their source in a great movement of feeling, not of mind; and the assertion, in "Hein-

rich Heine," that Byron and Shelley will be remembered for their passionate effort to flow in the main stream of modern literature. (But Morley's description of Shelley's poetic quality is as right as Arnold's was shockingly wrong.) One sees too in this essay the influence of Goethe, whose "luminous and coherent positivity," as Morley puts it, Byron never learned. Morley's own positivity, his stress on laws of science and society, keeps breaking in; Byron, he says, lacked the modern positive spirit, yet he reached out to it in his dramatic art, and his feeling for the long past of mankind. On Byron the artist Morley touches lightly but discerningly, noting his violent colors and sweeping pencil, his lack of fine descriptive touches, and of evocative words — T. S. Eliot has recently developed this idea of Byron's imperceptiveness to the English word.[21] Morley writes admirably of the Byronic hero, of Manfred and Lara and Cain and Harold, "clasping repose in a frenzy"; but from the "anti-social and licentious sentiment" of *Don Juan* he averts his eyes. "As for Great Britain, she deserved *Don Juan*," is true, but hardly adequate criticism of Byron's greatest poem. But it is not fair to expect a critic of 1870 to see Byron as the great satirist he is to us. On the other hand, Morley did divine, as Arnold's later essay did not,[22] the psychology of Byron's rebellion; he saw that Byron's weariness and pose and cynicism, the "diabolism" that later critics have analyzed,

[21] "Byron," in *From Anne to Victoria*, edited by Bonamy Dobrée (New York, 1937).

[22] "Byron," in *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series.

were marks of his deep self-distrust and remorse, that his revolt was negative because he never fully knew himself. And in recalling Byron's share in the struggle for liberation, Morley sounds the note of what was — and may yet be again — the power of Byron. "For this, history will not forget him."

IV

To set Morley's review of Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* beside his attack on *Poems and Ballads* is to see how far he had travelled in a few years along the way of imaginative insight. He had already published in the *Fortnightly* four of the essays collected in *The Renaissance*; and when the book, with its disturbing "Conclusion," appeared in 1873, he explained to Harrison:

"I think it very desirable to call attention to any book like Pater's, which is likely to quicken public interest in the higher sorts of literature. And, moreover, a young and unknown writer like him ought to be formally introduced to the company by the hired master of ceremonies, myself, or another to wit. So pray pardon my light dealing with his transgressions." [23]

Mrs. Humphry Ward, who was then twenty-three, has recalled the effect of *The Renaissance* on the Oxford of 1873, of its strange and poignant sense of beauty, its glorification of the intenser forms of aesthetic pleasure and intellectual passion as against the Christian doctrine of denial. "It was a gospel that both stirred and scandalized

[23] Hirst, I, 240.

Oxford. The bishop of the diocese thought it worth while to protest. There was a cry of Neo-paganism, and various attempts at persecution." [24]

No wonder that Morley's appreciative review brought gratitude from Pater "for your explanation of my ethical point of view to which I fancy some readers have given a prominence I did not mean it to have." The review (*Fortnightly*, April, 1873) has not been reprinted, probably because it was not an estimate of completed work but an introduction of an unknown writer. But in relating Pater's book to one great movement of ideas, in showing its meaning and value for its time, this is one of the finest and wisest of Morley's "synthetic" criticisms.

"The most popular of our two elder living poets," it boldly begins, "is too narrowly provincial, too blind to the new forces, too content with moral prettinesses, as the other is too singular in form and too metaphysical in direction, to be in the central current of European ideas." But a learned, vigorous, and original school of criticism is arising, and Pater's essays are the most remarkable example of this younger movement towards a fresh and inner criticism. Pater's style is far too singular in its excellence not to contain the germs of possible excess, but all excellent style does so. As to his matter, Morley, in pointing out Pater's constant association of art with the purposes of life, is anticipating Mr. Eliot's discovery of Pater as a moralist. Of course, Morley remarks, the philosophy of the "Conclusion" neither is, nor is meant to

[24] Cruse, p. 379.

be, a complete scheme for wise living and wise dying. But it takes morality for granted and deals with what a man thinks and feels beside morality and livelihood. Pater's theory of art is significant as one more wave, following Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, Morris, and Swinburne, of that passion for form and beauty released by the Oxford Movement, and as another protest against the narrow popular creed. It is this intellectual play and expansion that we require before social change can ripen. It is good for us to have such a school. "The prodigious block of our Philistinism needs to have wedges driven in at many points." Writers like Pater are needed to help protect us against absorption in politics, wealth, and the specialism of science.

How right — and how remarkable for 1873 — was Morley's realization of the value of this fresh and inner criticism is illustrated in Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith's exquisitely wrought essay "On Re-reading Pater." [25] For what a few of Pater's sensitive young contemporaries found in his work was nothing less than the discovery of a gospel, of a new way of living. Pater "gave them an inner standard of distinction, selection, refusal; imposed upon them almost a religious attitude. . . ." Of course the Cyrenaic doctrine of the "Conclusion," the search for moments of impassioned vision, was a gospel for impressionable youth. Pater himself, keenly feeling the general disapproval, withdrew the "Conclusion" from the second edition, "as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young

[25] In *Reperusals and Re-collections* (London, 1936).

men into whose hands it might fall." [26] In later years he reshaped his philosophy into the "new Cyrenaicism" of *Marius the Epicurean:*

"Not pleasure, but fulness of life, and 'insight' as conducting to that fulness — energy, variety, and choice of experience, including noble pain and sorrow even . . . sincere and strenuous forms of the moral life, such as Seneca and Epictetus — whatever form of human life, in short, might be heroic, impassioned, ideal."

Whether or no *The Renaissance*, with its accent on morbidity and intensity, was, as T. S. Eliot suggests, "not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives," [27] there are still those who, like Pearsall Smith, have kept always some enrichment of experience from the moments of fresh beauty, the artistic integrity, revealed by Pater.

It was the year after his criticism of Pater that Morley wrote his second essay on Victor Hugo. His first was an anonymous review of *Toilers of the Sea*, printed in the *Saturday Review* for April 7, 1866, four months after his Swinburne foray. Hard as it is today to read without a smile Swinburne's own ecstatic eulogies of Hugo, it is easy to see how a susceptible young positivist like Morley could have been, as he put it, stirred to the depths from first to last by the noble and pitying moral pulse that beat in Hugo's work. What moved him most in *Toilers of the Sea* was its picture of the sea's inexorable terror, so unlike

[26] A. C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (New York, 1906), p. 40.
[27] "Arnold and Pater," in *Selected Essays*, p. 356.

the "silly nonsense about its moaning over the harbour-bar while men must work and women must weep." Morley's comparison of Hugo's treatment of Nature with that of Keats and Wordsworth is discerning (and fairer to all concerned than is that very mixed quotation). And although, as Meredith felt, Morley hardly did justice to the amazing description of the storm, he did find the tragic ending magnificent. His review reached Hugo himself, and the master's response, quoted in the *Recollections*, must have made the young critic very proud:

"C'est là une page de haute et profonde critique. Jamais livre n'a été analysé avec plus de pénétration. L'auteur de l'article s'est assimilé toute la philosophie de l'œuvre qu'il a si admirablement compris. Je suis fier que mon livre soit présenté par un tel ecrivain au public anglais. . . . Son talent est un de ceux qui placent si haut la grande littérature anglaise."

Victor Hugo's tragic vision of life is more deeply probed in Morley's review of *Ninety-Three*.[28] The power of the book, he finds, lies in its portrayal of the three stern revolutionary figures against the mighty, sombre background of the forest of La Vendée. In defining a certain depth in Hugo's characterizations that is not in Scott's, Morley strikes out one of his most illuminating perceptions. Hugo, he says, "makes us conscious of that tragedy of temperament, that sterner Necessity of character, that resistless compulsion of circumstance, which is the modern and positive expression for the old Destiny of the Greeks,

[28] *Studies in Literature.*

and which in some expression or other is now an essential element in the highest presentation of human life." That intuition of Morley's, his sense of the resistless compulsion of circumstance, outreaches the romantic melodrama of Victor Hugo and points beyond its day to the tragic art of Thomas Hardy, the creator of Tess and Jude and the Immanent Will working "eternal artistries in circumstance."

The most brilliant of Morley's criticisms is his essay on Macaulay.[29] In this, his only study of the effect of style, the object stands out in sharply focused clarity. And the object is not Macaulay himself. For Morley chose to write his essay just before the publication of Trevelyan's fine biography, and in a later footnote declared that this "irresistibly attractive" portrait had not made him change one epithet of his criticism. (He wrote Harrison that he had sat up half the night over the book, but added, "But Macaulay was a true Philistine — a College don type of Philistine.")[30] Unlike Morley's other critical essays, this one does not deal mainly with ideas, for Macaulay contributed no great philosophical or historical concepts. It is Macaulay's influence that matters most, the vast popularity that has left its mark on the habits of thought and expression of a generation. One cannot, Morley says, take up a newspaper or review without seeing Macaulay's effect on journalism. Our journalists owe most of their virtues

[29] *Fortnightly*, April 1876; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. I.
[30] Hirst, II, 9.

to Mill, most of their vices to Macaulay. If Mill taught some of them to reason, Macaulay taught more of them to declaim. If Mill set an example of tolerance and fairness, Macaulay did much to encourage arrogance and complacency. It is on style that his strong genius has set its stamp, style in its relation to ideas and feelings, its reaction on the temper or conscience of the intellect. And one who touches the style of a generation shapes not only its sentences but its thought.

Of the reasons for Macaulay's power Morley gives a just account: his genius for narration, his immense knowledge, his rich variety and picturesque energy, and that unrivalled clarity that brought him the thanks of a group of workers "for having written a history that working men can understand." [31] Above all, his hearty faith in the commonplaces of patriotism and freedom put him in exact accord with the average sentiment of his day. For Macaulay was one of the middle-class crowd at heart, and rose above it only by splendid attainments and extraordinary gifts of expression. Beneath the hard glitter of his prose there is neither sympathy nor restraint, no wonder nor real humor. "His pictures glare, but are seldom warm." In swift flashes of figure Macaulay is pictured, marching "through the intricacies of things in a blaze of certainty," marshalling his high-stepping periods, "brandishing a two-edged gleaming sword," clutching Truth "by the hair of the head, and dragging her after him in a kind of boisterous triumph." Indeed Morley's own

[31] Cruse, pp. 127–8.

pages glitter with an almost Macaulayesque brilliance. More subtly imaginative is his comparison of Macaulay's stamping accents and shallow cadences, his "everlasting rapid solos on a silver trumpet," with the singing strings of Clarendon or the swelling organ-tones of Burke.

Against this stern judgment of Macaulay's quality and influence one's own first memories of absorbed if not always assenting delight rise in protest. And one thinks of those enthralled young Victorians, carried away by that torrential eloquence: of Rosebery, who at eleven read straight through the *Essays* and who owed to them, he said, "all the ambitions and aspirations I have ever indulged in"; of Balfour, to whom Macaulay gave much of the mental nourishment craved by "my very youthful appetite." [32] Perhaps Morley did not read those fascinating essays young enough. But by 1876 his apostolic radicalism, fortified by Chamberlain, inevitably turned him against the complacent gospel of the great Whig. For Morley's essay is another instance of his critical clairvoyance: it does express the modern attitude toward Macaulay as the complete middle-class early-Victorian. Even in that day of battle and transition when Morley wrote, Macaulay seemed part of a past already remote: he had not, what Mill and Cobden had, the feeling for tomorrow, "the presentiment of the eve."

[32] Cruse, p. 296.

## V

Morley's growing concern with men's acts and motives naturally led him to the art of character drawing that Meredith had urged on him. Through the French Studies he was practising this art, in sketches like the Madame de Warens in the *Rousseau* and in more fully drawn figures like the Vauvenargues. In the third volume of the *Critical Miscellanies* there are several of his later essays that are mainly portraits, illustrating in various ways his mature realization that "character is more than opinions." In "Harriet Martineau," written on the publication of her *Autobiography* in 1877,[33] Morley draws plain and clear a figure that had been clouded by disapproval of her religious unbelief and her faith in mesmerism; he shows her as she was, unlovely, but a vigorous, generous, and indomitable spirit. His sketch of W. R. Greg,[34] once his opponent in controversy, later his friend and neighbor, is beautifully done. With a sympathy that pierces through all differences in ideas, Morley pictures the quiet, winning man whose personality was richer than his thought. Behind the once-famous *Creed of Christendom*, one of the books that shook the beliefs of young men in the fifties, and the later, meditative *Enigmas of Life*, Morley reveals the fortitude and consideration of Greg, the rare grace of humility without which there is no veracity.

[33] *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. III.

[34] *Macmillan's Magazine*, June 1883; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. III.

The portrait of Mark Pattison [35] is drawn not only from his own *Memoirs*, one of the primary sources for nineteenth-century Oxford thought, but from Morley's vivid memories of his Lincoln College days: the grotesque boor elected by intrigue as Rector instead of Pattison, the strange solemn figure and creaking voice of the morose scholar himself. The key to Pattison's frustrated career was not the accident of his defeat but that weakness of will and character which itself defeated his full achievement. But Morley's later friendship tempers his judgment with humorous delight in recalling that rich ironic talk free from attacks of platitude, those almost luminous silences, the contacts with a living intelligence that had no designs on you.

The portrait that Morley should have drawn was George Eliot's. No friendship save Mill's meant more to him than hers, which dated from his first London years. Once or twice he has given us tantalizing glimpses of his visits to the Priory, when the great lady was in her very finest humour; of those Thursday dinners, the "high perfection of social intercourse," with their famous guests all kept in sympathetic play by Lewes's sparkling good-humour. But Morley's memory of the look of pain that haunted her eyes and brow, and his inimitable epithet "bishop-like," quoted by Elizabeth Haldane in her biography of George Eliot,[36] are his only touches of actual description. He was simply practising the incorrigible

[35] *Macmillan's*, April 1885; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. III.
[36] *George Eliot and Her Times* (New York, 1927), p. 54.

Victorian reticence, the dread of "hard curiosity" that made George Eliot destroy her friends' letters, and J. W. Cross omit and even alter parts of her letters in his *Life* and suppress the story of her intimacy with that strange Victorian, John Chapman.[37]

It was one of Morley's earliest reviews, "Some Notes on George Eliot," [38] that won him her friendship. With all its sententious manner, it shows keen understanding of her power to embody laws of character in real, struggling men and women, and appreciation of her humor that lies between laughter and tears. His later essay, "The Life of George Eliot," [39] is both commentary and criticism, for in her the woman and the writer were one. Of her union with Lewes, Morley writes discerningly, for he had known their perfect companionship, and the constant stimulus and devotion that Lewes gave her. He had known too the hothouse atmosphere of her secluded life, her arduous labors and deep dejections. But the loftiness of her character "passes nobly through the ordeal of an honest biography." (From the sharper ordeal of recent discoveries she is emerging less "lofty" but more human.) As for her novels, the Morley of 1885 had outgrown the excited enthusiasm which he had shared with the first readers of *Adam Bede*. He felt, as we do, her "fatiguing moralities,

[37] Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot and John Chapman* (Yale University Press, 1940).

[38] *Macmillan's*, August 1866; *Critical Miscellanies*, First Series (Chapman and Hall, 1878).

[39] *Macmillan's*, February 1885; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. III.

gravities, and ponderosities," her lack of imaginative enchantment. He saw the novels as we do, as the expression of the scientific concepts, the moral values of her time. His own work owed much to her, more perhaps than he knew. In a later address, "Words and their Glory," he analyzed the decline in her creative art caused by her constant association with science and by her ever-deepening sense of the pain of the world: "The double stress of emotion and thought, of sympathy and reason, wrought upon her too intensely for art. She could not, as virile natures should, reconcile herself to nature."

Behind Morley's appreciation of George Eliot there lay the sympathy of shared experience. Her rationalist's progress from fervent Evangelicalism through negation to a humanist's faith had followed a way close to his own. And he, like her, had won through austere denial to the fortitude that is beyond denial.

Of all Morley's portraits the finest is in the letters describing Mill's last visit to the beloved Surrey home. To his sister Morley wrote:

"I wish you had been here, to see the wisest and best of men. He is the one living person for whom I have an absolutely unalloyed veneration and attachment — and of whose kindness to me I am most proud. I even like our little house all the more for his having been in it. . . ." [40]

The longer letter to Harrison has caught an unfading memory in words that, Meredith said, are like the light of sunset thrown across the page:

[40] Hirst, I, 237.

"When he got here, he chatted to R—— over our lunch, with something of the simple amiableness of a child, about the wild flowers, the ways of insects, and notes of birds. He was impatient for the song of the nightingale. Then I drove him to our little roadside station, and one of the most delightful days of my life came to its end, like all other days, delightful and sorrowful." [41]

The figure of Mill in his simplicity and gentleness, his quick thought, his delight in wild flowers and bird-songs, has that grace that is the uttermost goodness. Something of the charm lingers in Morley's In Memoriam, "The Death of Mr. Mill." Written in the first days of loss, it catches in its slow cadences the pulse of grief: "The nightingale that he longed for fills the darkness with music, but not for the ear of the dead master: he rests in the deeper darkness where the silence is unbroken forever."

In this essay and in "Mr. Mill's Autobiography" the following year [42] Morley renders what no one else could have done as he did, the quality of Mill himself: his unique blend of arduous thought with unselfish living, of tolerance with courage, of patient search for truth with tireless effort for justice. "He appeals not to our sense of greatness and power in a teacher, which is noble, but to our love of finding and embracing truth for ourselves, which is nobler still." If the *Autobiography* records no heights nor depths nor tumults of the soul, yet its "pale flame of strenuous self-possession" burns clearly, undimmed by

[41] "The Death of Mr. Mill," *Critical Miscellanies*, III, 48–50.
[42] *Critical Miscellanies*, III.

disappointments and fed by steadfast hope for the future of men.

VI

Two of Morley's last critical essays, the "Emerson" and the "Wordsworth," were written as introductions to editions. In their grasp of essential meaning, their breadth of view, their sense of style and poetic quality, they are among his most mature and finest work.

"I have seen Emerson — the first *man* I have ever seen," wrote Mary Ann Evans in 1848 when Emerson was lecturing in England.[43] And when on his first visit to America in 1867 Morley went, with Mill's letter of introduction, to see Emerson, he carried away that sense of native dignity and greatness. (Indeed the glimpse of Emerson made a deeper impression on him than his strolls through the streets of Washington with a certain government clerk named Walt Whitman.) In Morley's Oxford days Cotter Morison had urged Emerson upon him; "but for that wise teacher," he confessed, "none of us were then ripe, I least of all." But in the essay on Emerson written at the end of 1883[44] the living memory brightens the critical judgment.

Although Morley's sketch of Emerson's life cannot equal Mr. Van Wyck Brooks's delightful re-creations, its clear simplicity is worthy of its subject: "The afternoon of his life was cloudless as the earlier day, and the shades of

[43] Cruse, p. 245.
[44] *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. I.

twilight fell in unbroken serenity. . . . So, tended in his home by warm filial devotion, and surrounded by the reverent kindness of his village neighbors, this wise and benign man slowly passed away."

In Morley's discussion of the style of Emerson there is a sensitiveness to prose and verse quality that was lacking in his early criticism. He traces the discontinuity of Emerson's mind, the habit and method of lecturing, in the difficult staccato of his prose, those sentences that have, as a neighbor put it, no connection, "save in God." Emerson's verse is not deeply felt, not inevitable enough. He almost forgot (as Victorian critics so often forgot) that "it is part of the poet's business to give pleasure." Yet his terse, homely phrases and jolting rhythms are stamped with his own friendliness and sincerity.

In Morley's treatment of Emerson's Transcendentalism there is no trace of the rationalist argument that kept breaking into the essays on Carlyle and Byron. He simply notes the limitations of Emerson's philosophy while showing how its stress on character and the inner life was needed in the external freedom of America. Morley even sets Emerson beside Mill among the great awakeners of the individual, just as in the *Recollections* he compares the effect of Emerson's epoch-making Phi Beta Kappa address of 1837, "The American Scholar," with that of another great plea for the freedom of the mind, Mill's *Liberty*. And as Mill outgrew the old Utilitarianism, so Emerson could not be contained within Transcendentalism; the man was greater than the sect. In one of his

finest critical passages Morley describes the ferment of New England in the forties working itself out in the wisdom of Emerson: without either excess or the reaction that turned Burke and Wordsworth back upon themselves, "Emerson kept on his way of radiant sanity and perfect poise." This sanity held him in line with the democratic and evolutionary movements of thought, whereas Carlyle in his reliance on mastery and force "chose to fling himself headlong and blindfold athwart the great currents of things. . . ."

Nowadays the great currents of things seem to have swung back toward Carlyle and away from Emerson. And a different day has found out the latter's inadequacies. We no longer rely on individual instincts to solve our life and death dilemmas; we know at last that men of good will must think and work and fight together to save their heritage. Emerson's view of Nature, "all things are moral," has little meaning for us who face the uttermost might of cruelty and evil. Indeed the optimism of Emerson is as remote from our darkened day as is his America of the forties, so safe, so unentangled with Europe's "desperate inheritances." Emerson speaks but faintly to us now; yet men may turn to him again, as did Morley and so many others, for renewed assurance of the things of the spirit.[45]

There is no more striking example of the effects of literature on living than the influence of Wordsworth on

[45] O. W. Firkins, "Has Emerson a Future?" in *Selected Essays* (University of Minnesota Press, 1933).

earnest Victorians. Without Wordsworth John Stuart Mill could hardly have survived his upbringing. In Wordsworth's poems, discovered in Mill's crisis of dejection, he "seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings. . . . From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial source of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence." [46] "I never before," said George Eliot at nineteen, "met with so many of my own feelings expressed just as I should like them." To Charles Kingsley, Wordsworth was "not only poet but preacher and prophet of God's new and divine philosophy, a man raised up as light in a dark time." [47]

Inevitably, then, Victorian criticism of Wordsworth reflects what Wordsworth has done for the critic. The most objective, as it is also the most sensitive, is Pater's essay (1874), reprinted in *Appreciations*.[48] For Pater, who anticipated Arnold in noting the "perplexed mixture" of poetic and prosaic in Wordsworth, is keenly aware of his clear, delicate renderings of sight and sound, his "sense of the expressiveness of outward things." And Pater escaped the pitfalls that beset Wordsworthians by treating Wordsworth's ideas as "philosophical imaginings," poetically, not systematically used. But Pater too finds in Wordsworth a lesson ("if men must have lessons," he adds) —

[46] *Autobiography*, p. 148.
[47] Cruse, p. 176.
[48] In *Appreciations* (New York, 1907).

the supreme importance of impassioned contemplation. "To treat life in the spirit of art" was for Pater not only "the true moral significance of art and poetry": it was the heart of his own morality.

It was in 1875 that Leslie Stephen turned to Wordsworth's poetry after his first wife's death. Out of that dark time there grew his essay "Wordsworth's Ethics," in which, as in few others, his own deeper tones are heard: "Other poetry becomes trifling when we are making our inevitable passages through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Wordsworth's alone retains its power. We love him the more as we grow older and become more deeply impressed with the sadness and seriousness of life. . . ."[49] The essay is not literary criticism, as Stephen was the first to say; it is not concerned with Wordsworth's poetic quality but with his ethical teaching, his "lesson" of transmuting sorrow into strength. "He is a prophet and a moralist as well as a mere singer. His ethical system, in particular, is as distinctive and capable of systematic exposition as that of Butler. By endeavoring to state it in plain prose, we shall see how the poetical power implies a sensitiveness to ideas which, when extracted from the symbolic embodiment, fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought."

When the essay was printed in *Hours in a Library* in 1879, that passage caught the eye of Matthew Arnold, who was then writing the preface to his edition of the poems

[49] *Hours in a Library* (New York, 1904), III, 135–6.

of Wordsworth.[50] In Arnold's memorable essay Stephen appears, on the strength of those phrases, the "systematic exposition" and the "scientific system of thought," as one of the devout Wordsworthians who are apt to praise him for the wrong things and to lay far too much stress on what they call his philosophy. There follows that inimitable picture — "Mat in excelsis" — of the Social Science Congress filling its dusty benches with bald-headed men and bespectacled women while the orator declaims some of the dullest lines of *The Excursion.*

Now we need not assume with John Dover Wilson in his Leslie Stephen Lecture[51] that Stephen is the orator with the uplifted face. Nor need we pursue Professor Wilson's argument that Stephen's criticism of Wordsworth is juster than Arnold's. No doubt Arnold did disarrange Wordsworth's poems and dismiss his philosophy too cavalierly. Stephen was actually following Wordsworth's own suggestion in his preface to the 1814 edition of *The Excursion:* "It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system . . . ; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself." And Stephen did glimpse within the poetry the profound psychology, the "growth of a poet's mind," which Professor Beatty and Professor Havens have explored. But as to the "scientific system,"

[50] *Essays in Criticism,* Second Series.

[51] *Leslie Stephen and Matthew Arnold as Critics of Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1939).

Stephen himself abandoned that emphasis. In his later essay, "Wordsworth's Youth," [52] he contrasts Wordsworth and Coleridge: "Wordsworth's philosophy, such as it is, represents intuitions or convictions. . . . He speaks as from inspiration, not as the builder of a logical system." So, and in almost the same words, writes that great Wordsworthian, Professor de Selincourt: "His philosophy, as far as he was a philosopher, *was* his religion; he never examined its logical implications. . . . His faith was a passionate intuition of God present in the Universe and in the mind of man; his philosophy no more than the struggle of his reason to account for it." [53]

Arnold's essay marks, as Professor Wilson admits, a great moment in the history of our understanding of Wordsworth. It turned the tide of his diminishing fame and gave him the place in English poetry that he still holds. "The Wordsworth who survives," says Mr. Herbert Read, "is Arnold's Wordsworth." [54] If we no longer use Arnold's critical jargon — having plenty of our own — we share his sense of Wordsworth's extraordinary power. Arnold really caught more of the poet's secret than did Stephen: "the deep power of joy" gives more of his essence than the transmuting of sorrow. And no one has ever described better than Arnold the nobly plain manner of Wordsworth: "Nature herself seems to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power."

[52] *Studies of a Biographer* (New York, 1907), I, 231.
[53] *Wordsworth's Prelude* (Oxford, 1926), Intro., pp. lvii–lviii.
[54] *Wordsworth* (New York, 1931), p. 34.

Morley's essay, also an introduction to an edition of Wordsworth,[55] was naturally built on Arnold's; but the mind, and the voice, is his own. He objects to ranking poets, as Arnold did, "as if they were collegians in a class-list." He even boldly declares that at least one stanza of the famous Ode, if reduced to prose, would turn out to be nonsense. His biographical section is the plain unvarnished tale of an age that had not discovered Annette — but even if Morley had known of her, he would not, one feels sure, have made her the key that unlocks Wordsworth's whole heart, and mind. In his sense of the deep truthfulness of *The Prelude*, as in his loving descriptions of Dorothy and of their life at Grasmere, one catches foretastes of M. Legouis and Professor de Selincourt. Morley, so aware of "the blind and remorseless cruelties of life," could not see Nature as Emerson or Wordsworth saw her. But he could deeply feel the power of those great poems and passages that are like the landscape in which they were written. With Mill and Stephen and Arnold he turned to Wordsworth for reconciliation. Each of them found in the great anti-rationalist poet the healing power that he needed, the "quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure." Even so have Wordsworth's mighty sonnets heartened English men and women in "their finest hour,"

> A people, on their own beloved Land
> Risen like one man, to combat in the sight
> Of a just God for liberty and right.

[55] *Studies in Literature.*

There is no better test of an original mind than its power to outgrow its premises. Morley's intuitive taste guided him more surely than his rationalist criteria. As his response to varieties of beauty widened, his convictions were no longer limitations. If it is hard for us to realize, as M. Filon has reminded us,[56] how new and daring the essays on Carlyle and Macaulay and Browning first seemed, that is because their findings have entered into our ways of thought. In vigor and penetration and superb common sense Morley harks back to those older masters of English criticism, to Dryden and Johnson. His constant search for significant values in literature and life, his growing power to temper his judgments with deeper understanding, give to his criticism a vitality beyond its reputation. As critic, editor, writer, he is one of the master-spirits of his time.

## VII

Criticism so rich and alive must spring from a mind eager for experience of books and living. Morley, like his father, was a born reader, the kind of reader who, as he said of Pattison, explores through books the voyages of the mind. One can still feel the excitement of his discoveries as one turns the marked pages of his beloved books, or reads his manuscript notebook of quotations and reflections, from which grew some of his essays. There is no perfunctory genuflection, for instance, but fresh perception in his re-readings of Shakespeare: his sense of the

[56] *Essais Critiques*, Introduction by Augustin Filon.

deep irony of our modern time, in *Measure for Measure*. The passages from his journals printed in the *Recollections*, the chapter "Holiday in Norfolk," are interwoven with bright threads of his delighted reading: "Dante's ever-adorable passage," the "delicious" poetry of Horace, "the ever lovely lament for Hector." His holidays were filled with the companionship of Homer and Sophocles and Lucretius, companionship which gave such depth and dignity to his writing and his life. Especially he loved those historians, essayists, and moralists, Plutarch, Seneca, Bacon, Clarendon, Burke, Pascal, Goethe, Vauvenargues, to whom he paid the tribute of his essay on "Aphorisms."

To share that intellectual heritage with those less privileged was one of Morley's strongest motives. The same concern for the training of the new democracy that sent him into the fight for national education took him later into those movements for adult education which aimed "to connect learning with the living forces of society." His essay "On Popular Culture" [57] was the address he gave as President of the Midland Institute in Birmingham; "On the Study of Literature" [58] was given to the students of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching. And his contacts with the working of popular education strengthened the faith that he shared with Arnold in the values of imaginative literature for a scientific and materialistic age. On his audiences of working men he

[57] *Fortnightly*, November 1876; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. III.

[58] *Studies in Literature*.

urged the habit of giving a few moments to one of the great books that open out the day and bring courage and mastery; no man or woman, he thought, is too busy for fifteen minutes of good reading. That for him at least these were not mere counsels of perfection we know from his journals: "Canto of *Paradiso* before breakfast"; "Learned fifty lines from Lucretius. Took me just about half an hour. I can mend this before long." This was recreation for a Secretary for Ireland.

The effect, the veritable power, of this saturation in literature is suggested in Viscount Esher's impression of Morley in the days when he was Secretary for India. As he sat in his library among his eleven thousand books, something of their virtue seemed to have passed into him, giving "this frail middle-class library student the moral and intellectual fibre which has led him upward from that Lancashire village to Whitehall, and to a position of power almost despotic over millions of human beings. . . ." "Why," asked Lord Esher, "has power been given by his fellow-countrymen to this man, who has inherited neither position nor wealth? He is decidedly no flatterer of the democracy, and no demagogue. . . . I do not pretend to explain — but it is certainly *not* that he is contented with half-knowledge or low standards." [59]

VIII

From his own long experience as editor and author Morley spoke some words on the practice and art of writ-

[59] *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher*, II, 214.

ing that are fair tests of his own work. Writing begins, he knew, with fundamental brain-work, the analysis and organization of ideas. His essays and books with their firmly articulated structure, their backbone of thought, can stand that test better than many more widely known. As for style, that comes, he had said in one of his first reviews, "from brooding over ideas, not over words." He had little faith in the rules of style, but much in the habit of direct and precise expression. To know what you mean and to find the right word, he told an audience of students, are mental operations, not helped by writing for writing's sake. "Right expression is a part of character." To try to write like Carlyle or Macaulay or Ruskin would be the worst thing a student could do. The two essential qualities of style, he said in his presidential address to the English Association,[60] are sanity and *justesse*—a fair mind. For these are qualities within reach, and grandeur for most of us is not. "And with this temper it is easier to see the truth, what things really are. . . ."

In his first crowded journalist years, Morley once confessed, he took too little thought for style. But the feeling for words grew upon him, as one can see in his careful revisions of his sentences, not only for meaning but for sound and cadence. He read Sainte-Beuve and George Sand, he said, partly to try to soften some of the crudities of his own prose. And he heeded the keen criticisms of Meredith and Harrison, who urged him to practise sim-

[60] "Science and Literature," reprinted as "The Glory of Words," in *The Works of Lord Morley*, vol. IV.

plicity. His early prose is often too elaborate in structure, over-stressed in rhythm. In passages like "which everlastingly saddens the compassionating ear like moaning of a midnight sea," the cadences are too regular, the alliteration and assonance echo like tolling bells. The cumbrous repetitions and long-drawn phrases in his first work came partly from his exposure to Burke and his other beloved orators, partly from his own argumentative and exhorting mood, partly from sheer Victorian delight in an eloquence so alien to our sterner taste.

For, unlike modern prose writers, the Victorians were not trying to catch the rhythms of everyday speech. In his "Macaulay" Morley argued that the rhythms of speaking to an actual listener would naturally be different from the subtler cadences and more varied modulations of writing for the inner ear. And in modern prose too there are passages, like some of D. H. Lawrence's, as different from the rhythms of speech as they are perfectly suited to their mood. One may even enjoy turning back now and then from some casual or conscious or elusive writing to Victorians like Huxley and Bagehot and Arnold and Morley who, since they were not listening to their own voices or watching their own mental processes, could keep their eye simply on the object.

Out of his rigorous experience of platform and Parliament, out of his own fearless spirit, Morley did win the stirring simplicity of some of his later writings and speeches, like the memorable refrain of his Manchester speech, "It will still be wrong." Out of his deep feeling

came grave, firm accents, "The narrowness of the cribbed deck that we are doomed to tread," and the moving adagio of his grief for Mill, "He rests in the deeper darkness where the silence is unbroken for ever." In sentences that belong to our literature Morley's style did reach at times his own clear goal, "the steadfast use of a language in which truth can be told."

# CHAPTER IX

## THE ORDEAL OF A VICTORIAN LIBERAL

IT IS TOO EASY to over-simplify the Liberalism of the mid-Victorians. It is not enough to dismiss the thinking of Morley's generation as the by-product of middle-class supremacy, or to label it with a *laissez-faire*. The pattern of Morley's thought was woven of many strands: the knowledge of working conditions, the reforming spirit of his Blackburn boyhood; the utilitarian and positivist teachings of Mill and Comte; the new rationalist and scientific ideas of the fifties and sixties. From an uncritical acceptance of the French eighteenth-century tradition, a blind trust in reason and inevitable progress, Morley had been saved partly by his realistic training, partly by the habit of seeing the other side that led him from Condorcet to Burke, from abstract principles to relative, experimental methods. And to Mill he owed not only the dynamic idea of liberty as fulness of life and opportunity, but the compelling example of the thinker dedicated to his fellowmen.

And so, when Morley met Chamberlain in the summer of 1873, soon after the death of Mill, he was ready for the active experience that precipitated his radical motives and theories into a working programme. Until the parting of their ways thirteen years later their friendship was more and more absorbed in the effort to make political Liberal-

ism the party of the people. Their first step, the attack on sectarian schools in the struggle to amend the Education Act, led naturally to the cause of Disestablishment of the Church of England. In joining the Liberation Society Morley was simply acting on the argument of *On Compromise*, that an Established Church is the enemy of new ideas. For three years, as Mr. Hirst's chapter tells,[1] Morley worked tirelessly, in the *Fortnightly*, in the Liberation Society, on lecture platforms, to put the Church Question first among political reforms. His ally Harrison soon realized that a Liberal Party still led by Gladstone and Hartington and Forster could never be revived or reunited by Disestablishment; and indeed the Church Question was swallowed up by Disraeli's Eastern Question. But for Morley that three-year crusade was not wasted. His work side by side with such public-spirited Dissenters as Dr. R. W. Dale and George Dawson gave him a respect for the goodness of the godly that warmed and deepened all his later thinking. And the Birmingham group which met at Chamberlain's home and worked for his municipal reforms drew Morley into a fellowship, a "training-ground in living social interests," he calls it in the *Recollections*, that was helping to shape the Radical Programme.

Through those crowded years as active reformer Morley was still editor and writer. He was finishing the long labor of his *Diderot*, writing for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* his masterly short biographies of Burke and Comte, publishing the second series of his *Critical Miscellanies*

[1] Hirst, II, 1–23.

and a new cheap edition of his works. In his arduous editorship of Macmillan's English Men of Letters Series, he was developing the model form of what Mr. Nicolson has called "biography for students," to which in 1879 Morley contributed his own third study of Burke. And then, just after being beaten as Liberal candidate for Westminster, Morley became in May, 1880, editor of an evening newspaper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. For over two years he carried on with the help of his brilliant, ill-starred assistant editor, W. T. Stead; for another two years, 1883–1885, he was editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*, in which some of the essays of his third volume of *Critical Miscellanies* appeared.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* was for Morley a preface to politics. For Gladstone's government of 1880 had brought Chamberlain into the Cabinet, and with Chamberlain Morley took up the cause of conciliation and land-reform for Ireland against Forster's Coercion Bill. Their triumph in the resignation of Forster in May, 1882, and the beginning of a new conciliation policy was cut short by the murder of the new Irish Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish. But Morley had proved his power, and the swift result was his election in February, 1883, as Liberal member for Newcastle.

II

The last book that Morley wrote before he turned from letters to politics was his first great success. In fact the popularity of the *Life of Cobden* helped to put him into

Parliament, and after his election it was the *Cobden* that made him one of the most sought-for Liberal speakers outside the government. And it still ranks, with his own *Gladstone*, among the great English political biographies — a fine book about a fine man.

Like his French studies, Morley's *Cobden* was a social force, a book that shaped opinion. But there is in its defence of Cobden no urging or argument; by 1881 Morley had learned the biographer's art of letting his subject speak and act. Even a modern reader, wary of two heavy volumes, could not find much to leave out except some pages of Cobden's letters and foreign journals — Morley had cut out many more after Cobden's friend and disciple, Sir Louis Mallet, warned him that they would sink the book. A biographer of the household of Lytton Strachey would have little use for a character so simple and open as Cobden, without an inhibition or a hidden motive. Yet Cobden's career had its own drama. Dickens might have invented the story of his boyhood: one of eleven children, born in an old farmhouse where "poverty oozed in," for five years ill-fed, ill-taught, ill-treated in a Yorkshire school that was a very Dotheboys Hall. From this desolate background Cobden's escape into calico-selling and printing, travel, and public life came through his eagerly adventurous mind. For his real interest, as Mr. J. L. Hammond says, was not in his own business but in the affairs of men.[2] His growing vision of a world united and pacified by Free Trade made him more than "an inspired

[2] "Richard Cobden," in *The Great Victorians.*

bagman with a calico millennium." His life-long passion for improving social conditions linked him with Morley's earlier heroes, Turgot and Condorcet and Mill. He won his great victory against the Corn Laws with the irresistible persuasion and conviction of a born reformer. And though, as he wrote to John Bright, he grew less hopeful of seeing any material change in his own time, yet he never lost his faith in humanity and its future.

Cobden's career, like his character, was of a single piece. Because Free Trade and Non-intervention were to him one and the same cause, it was a single battle that he fought from first to last. Both Morley and J. A. Hobson in his *Richard Cobden: The International Man*[3] have shown that Corn Law Repeal and opposition to vast armaments and war threats were inseparable parts of his long effort for the welfare of the new industrial workers. Morley realized, though he did not stress as modern critics do, the limitation of Cobden's vision, the incompleteness of his programme. For it was not enough to make the workers' food cheaper without supporting the factory acts and the trade unions that were winning decent conditions of work and living: "as if," said Morley in the *Recollections*, "unorganised demands in hours and wages were not just as useless as demands for free food would have been without the organisation of his own League." If Cobden could not trust enough to the protective power of the state, he trusted too much to the benevolence of the business man; like Adam Smith and the Economists, he

[3] *Richard Cobden: The International Man* (New York, 1919).

assumed that the manufacturer "could have no interest opposed to the general good." But if he missed one side of the Condition-of-England Question, he pointed, years before Matthew Arnold, to another: an English peasantry with no more share in the soil he tills than the horse he drives.

In a concluding passage that sounds once again the theme of all his biographical studies, Morley puts Cobden where he belongs among the creative statesmen: "Great economic and social forces flow with a tidal sweep over communities that are only half-conscious of that which is befalling them. Wise statesmen are those who foresee what time is thus bringing, and endeavor to shape institutions and to mould men's thought and purpose in accordance with the change that is silently surrounding them."

(President Roosevelt once quoted these sentences in a speech as having been written by John Stuart Mill — an unconscious tribute with which Morley would have been well content.)

This prophetic element in Cobden's thinking was not in his *laissez-faire* economics, which Morley rejected, but in his international vision, that deep sense of the unity of civilization that both he and Gladstone possessed. When Cobden as long ago as 1849 proposed international arbitration "to bind nations to do that before a war which they always do after it," when he opposed foreign loans for war purposes and urged gradual disarmament, he was working toward a world order that now seems infinitely

farther away than in his lifetime. Yet Cobden's programme of trade agreements as paths to peace has been carried on by Mr. Cordell Hull with an unswerving devotion like Cobden's own. Even in the midst of war Cobden's vision of the interdependence of nations still lives in the minds of the men and women who are working undauntedly for the foundation of a better world order and a lasting peace.

III

If only Morley had left politics alone, Thomas Hardy once said, he might have been the Gibbon of his age. "What a pity," said Chamberlain, "that Morley has left a sphere where he might have shone still higher for a sphere where he can never predominate." What a pity, one feels, that Morley did not write his life of Mill. Above all, what a pity that he did not carry on Mill's unfinished work and formulate the idea of a new Liberalism.

Why did not Morley become the interpreter of the later Liberalism? The answer can only point to a certain defect of his great quality: an instinctive reliance on individual effort rather than collective action. He could express and extend the Liberal tradition; he could not reconstruct it to meet the needs of a new time. And his own gift, as he felt, was not for abstract political thought but for the interpretation of political thinkers, the men whose ideas have helped to shape history. Besides, a brilliant young Victorian writer with an urge for reform could hardly have resisted the career of politics. For Mor-

ley was a son of Oxford, where, it has been said, public life has been more highly honored than letters; he had grown up in the tradition of writer-statesmen, of Clarendon and Halifax and Burke and Macaulay. How could he help turning from journalism to Parliament, to what seemed the greater chance for ability and influence, leaving the orchestra, as he put it, for the stage? Arnold had pressed him to try for a high post in political journalism, "a proud and very useful place, where you would be more useful, happier, more yourself, than in Parliament." To be sure, Morley afterward admitted, a man ought to be himself; but he does sometimes wish to be somebody else.[4]

Whether Arnold and Chamberlain were right it is not for this writer to say. Several of those who can speak with authority on Morley's political life have discussed it in articles written after his death; those of H. W. Massingham, Dr. G. P. Gooch, and J. A. Spender give the fullest comment that is as yet available.[5] Morley's French Studies, says Spender, had earned him the reputation of being a doctrinaire [an ironic twist of his real attitude]. He was a literary man, a late-comer into Parliament. For all his grave eloquence on the platform, he was never at home in debate. He was marked as not a "House of Commons man." He was not always firm in action. And so after Gladstone's retirement the one man after him most fitted to give moral and intellectual dignity to the Liberal creed

[4] *Recollections*, I, 187–8.

[5] *Fortnightly*, November 1923; *Contemporary Review*, November 1923; *Westminster Gazette*, September 1926; *Fortnightly*, December 1938.

was not mentioned for party leader or for Prime Minister. The most distinguished of the Liberals, he would not do to lead them. As to another honorable hope, it was barred by the tradition that no little-Englander or anti-Imperialist could be Foreign Secretary. One cannot help regretting, with Massingham, the opportunities that might have been Morley's in 1894 and 1905, in that crucial field of international relations.

Spender reports a dinner at Morley's home in 1898 when he and Chamberlain talked freely of the disappointments of public life. Chamberlain spoke bitterly of Gladstone for having deprived him of the prize of his career, the one thing worth having, the Prime Ministership. (A strange fate it was that awarded that prize in that family.) Morley demurred, and spoke of forgotten Prime Ministers, and of lesser ministers who had shone as stars in history.

In spirit and in influence on the younger men who followed him, Morley too became one of the shining ones. Whatever his own disappointments, he never regretted his choice. He cared much for high place and power; he cared far more for principle. In fact he suffered much less than Chamberlain from being in the opposition. It was his genius to fight for the difficult, the unpopular cause. By what he did in office he stands among Englishmen who have deserved well of Ireland and of India. By what he *was* he stands for the priceless tradition of political integrity and international morality. "Face to face with a great issue," wrote Mr. A. G. Gardiner in 1908, "he sounds a note of moral greatness, austere and pure,

that is heard from no other lips today." [6] On that high stage he played a memorable part.

One cannot read the chapter of Morley's *Recollections* called "The Crisis: Parting of Friends," or the accounts by Mr. Hirst and Mr. Garvin of the swift-moving events that led to the Liberal disaster of 1886, without a sense of tragic issues far deeper than the personal rupture. For the Radical or "Unauthorized" Programme was more than a bold political move to banish the Whigs and to make Chamberlain the next Liberal leader. It was the first response by a political group to the needs of the new voters, the first programme for the coming democracy. Disraeli in his *Sybil* had caught the vision of a Conservatism that should unite "the two nations" of rich and poor, and had moved toward it in his Public Health and Artisans' Dwelling Acts before he was diverted into Imperialist adventure. But Chamberlain, with his Birmingham experience, his popular appeal, his genius for leadership, strengthened by Morley's conviction and grasp of Liberal thought, might have created a Liberal democracy that would for long have needed no Labour Party. They failed, and the Radical Programme was thrust aside, because Gladstone, not fully aware of the new forces and needs, tried to draw the whole democratic movement into the cause of Irish Home Rule. His defeat in 1886 not only drove out Chamberlain and broke the Liberal Party but destroyed its chance of becoming the party of the future.

[6] "Lord Morley of Blackburn," in *Prophets, Priests, and Kings* (London, 1908).

To Morley in 1886, torn by divided loyalties and opposing claims, this judgment of modern British historians[7] would have been impossible. He never, says Mr. Hirst, admitted that Gladstone was mistaken, except in his treatment of Chamberlain. Morley himself had moved as gradually as Gladstone did suddenly to the acceptance of Home Rule; but once committed, by his speech of December 21, 1885, at Newcastle, to Gladstone's way, he could not, as he told Chamberlain, honorably refuse to follow. Even in that first valley of decision, on January 31, 1886, when he went to Gladstone and steadily recited his seven objections to accepting the Irish Secretaryship,[8] he knew that the choice was made. Of the cost of that decision there is a hint in his diary for 1894, when he foresaw that he would be charged with deserting Gladstone by not resigning with him: "How could I face the memory of having a second time been his active coadjutor in breaking up the party?"

But having put his hand to the Irish plough, Morley, like his leader, never turned back. In that long labor no Englishman save Gladstone played so decisive a part. Through the stormy years that followed the rejection of the First Home Rule Bill: the four years (1886–1890) of negotiations with Parnell, ended by the latter's tremendous downfall; the three harassed and difficult years (1892–1895) of his second Irish Secretaryship, to which "con-

[7] J. A. Spender, *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth, 1886–1935* (London, 1936); R. C. K. Ensor, *England: 1870–1914* (London, 1936).

[8] *Recollections*, I, 214.

science and instinct" held him even when in 1894 he could have been Secretary of State for India, his faith and courage kept the respect of the Irish and rallied his divided party to their pledges. His fidelity, as Dr. Gooch says, was the more heroic since by temperament he could never love the Irish. One is glad that he lived to return, a bent old man, to the House of Lords in 1921 to move the ratification of the Irish Treaty.

"I am a cautious Whig by temperament; I am a sound Liberal by training; and I am a thorough Radical by observation and experience": so Morley once described himself. And there is truth in Mr. Garvin's remark that Morley was at heart more akin to the older philosophic Radicals, more concerned with liberation than with reconstruction. Yet through the six years of Conservative government after the *débâcle* of 1886, he was still working to pick up some of the pieces of the Radical Programme. In a remarkable speech on "Liberalism and Social Reform" at a dinner of the Liberal "Eighty Club" in 1889, he called for a platform of free education, of local authority for the administration of schools, relief, housing, and liquor control, of taxation of landlords for improvements, and defended factory laws and labor unions. He took part in drawing up the Newcastle Programme of 1891, an effort to bring together the liberal and radical sections of the party and to attract labor. Actually its proposed reforms roused little enthusiasm in any group; two of them, Disestablishment of the Churches of Scotland and Wales and local veto of the liquor traffic, united powerful interests

in opposition. Morley's claim, in a speech at Newcastle in 1894, that the Liberals had won the election of 1892 on the Newcastle Programme, is not confirmed by the historians. That speech is notable not only for its defence of his Irish administration but for its frank appeal to the growing power of labor not to make war on the Liberals. Morley declared that he wanted many more labor representatives in Parliament, that he himself was ready to give way to a labor candidate. "The day may come," he foretold, "when the Liberal Party will be transformed or superseded by some new party. But before that there is work which only the Liberal Party can do." For they knew, as Morley had always known, that the strength of the nation lay in its workers. If only the Liberal Party could have turned that vision fully into action, Morley might not have lived to see his prophecy come true.

But it was the older, not the newer, Liberal in Morley who made one crucial decision of those years. His refusal to vote for the Eight Hours Bill for Miners defeated him at Newcastle in 1895 — he won the seat for the Montrose Burghs the next year. And that refusal may have cost him, as Massingham believed, the chance to lead his party out of *laissez-faire* toward a social Liberalism for a new age. He had the confidence of nonconformists, capitalists, and workers — his own Newcastle constituents were mainly skilled laborers. In mediating successfully in a threatened factory strike, he had already carried the Liberal tradition of political justice into the field of labor relations. But the chance, if there was one, was soon gone.

For after their defeat of 1895 the Liberals were too deeply divided by the Imperialist cleavage, too swiftly submerged by the excitement of the South African War.

There is no foundation for a recent critic's charge that Morley was "no friend of labor." Actually, organized labor was at first divided on the Eight Hours Bill; the Trades Union Congress had declared for more than eight hours if a majority of the workers in a trade wanted more. "Morley is bound to vote against the Eight Hours Bill," wrote Harcourt, "for his Durham miners who are dead against it." [9] Morley argued in defence of his position that eight hours was a reasonable minimum but should not be a legal maximum; that a limitation needed for one class of workers would be a hardship for others; and that the real tragedy of the workers was not long hours, but uncertain wages and unemployment. One can admire his candor and courage as much as one regrets his estrangement from the labor movement which he had so long defended. For he had known the conditions of miners and factory-workers, farm-laborers and slum-dwellers; he had been stirred to effective protest by misery and injustice. Over and over he had declared that the old *laissez-faire* Liberalism of unorganized labor and unlimited competition would not do for the new social order; that "the mounting evils of industrialism can be remedied only by collective action." Because the Eight Hours question seemed to challenge his basic belief in individual liberty,

[9] A. G. Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (London, 1923), II, 171.

he answered it without regard to his career, out of his deepest convictions. In act as in thought he could maintain the great tradition; he could not move far beyond it.

IV

Just before the fall of the Liberal government in 1895 there happened an incident that sent Morley back in spirit to that seventeenth century in which his own Liberalism was rooted.[10] When the Liberals in the House of Commons proposed a vote of five hundred pounds towards a statue of Oliver Cromwell, the anger of the Irish members blazed so high that a refusal became certain, and it fell to Morley to withdraw the motion. In his speech he described Cromwell's Drogheda massacre as "a blunder and a crime." The phrase was taken up by S. H. Church, the author of a life of Cromwell, who in his preface appealed to Morley: "You, Mr. Morley, large-minded statesman and discerning critic, will you not withdraw the stigma of the blunder and the crime?"[11] Whether that plea had anything to do with the writing of Morley's *Oliver Cromwell* I do not know; but in the discussion that followed the statue incident Carlyle's glorification of the Strong Man was seized on by the new believers in blood and iron, and "Cromwell became a name on an Imperialist flag." And so Morley was moved to try a juster estimate.

For Cromwell is one of those great mysterious figures that each age sees as symbol of its own struggles, as apostle

[10] *Recollections*, II, 48–52.

[11] S. H. Church, *Oliver Cromwell, a History* (New York, 1897).

of liberty or of discipline, as saint or superman or dictator. Paradox, as Lord Tweedsmuir has said, is the fibre of his character and career: a law-abiding civilian, he was forced to break the law and take up the sword.[12] It was no easy task for a nineteenth-century agnostic to enter into the mind of the seventeenth-century mystic, but Morley's mature historic sense, his effort, as he said, to understand the possible reasons and motives for everything, seldom fails. "The book," said Meredith, "is a model for the tone of good history." To be sure, it does not draw so spacious a background as does Lord Tweedsmuir's of that age of economic disintegration, a tangle of religious struggles and political dogmas, of haunting insecurity, disillusion, and sense of sin. But Morley's fine description of Puritanism as the expression of undying instincts in men and women of many faiths, and of that rock of Calvinism on which Cromwell's faith was founded, came from deeps of experience that he had not known when he wrote *Voltaire*. He would not then have been so moved by Cromwell's dying question, "Tell me, is it possible to fall from grace?"

In treating Cromwell's part in the execution of Charles I, Morley is still the historian, not the judge. His one outburst of indignation, repeated in the *Recollections*, is not against the regicides but against Carlyle's glorification of their deed as the death-blow to Cant: "As if, for that matter, force, violence, sword, and axe never conceal a cant and an unveracity of their own, viler and crueller

[12] John Buchan, *Oliver Cromwell* (Boston, 1934).

than any other." But on Cromwell's Irish campaign, Morley's judgment stands unchanged: however excused by the laws of war in his time, it was a blunder and a butchery. To the eternal Irish question Cromwell's settlement added only misery and bitterness. Yet this same Cromwell had warned his officers that "what we gain in a free way, it is better than twice as much in a forced, and will be more truly ours and our posterity's." He tried to make toleration prevail, but his work was undone by the war he waged.

In style as in viewpoint, the *Cromwell* expresses the mature Morley; there are no more purple passages of burning anger against injustice or fervor for humanity, no more swelling, long-drawn cadences. The grave dignity and firm texture are enriched here and there by inevitable strains of Milton and the Bible — "this black granite of Fate, Predestination, and Foreknowledge absolute," "bloodshed and clamor that shook thrones, principalities, and powers." At its best, as in the portrait of Falkland, "one of that rare band of the sons of time, soldiers in lost causes, who find this world too vexed and rough a place for them," the *Cromwell* is a high-water mark of Victorian prose.

No less an authority than Dr. Samuel Gardiner praised Morley's book for the truth of its portraits but thought it too severe to Cromwell himself. Morley had no access to unprinted manuscripts which have strengthened the evidence in Cromwell's favor. And he could not help sometimes judging Cromwell by his own Liberal standards,

seeing "violence offered to a Parliament as something more wicked than violence offered to a king." [13] But in his final estimate Morley was at one with Gardiner and with later biographers. Cromwell was the unconquerable captain, whose military genius set his mark on the destinies of England. But he failed in the harder task, a task too great for any man then living, of laying the foundations for a lasting order. "Wherever force was useless, Cromwell failed," is Morley's answer to the worshippers of force. But though he failed, he was still the mighty man of faith in God and charity for men — the Cromwell who spoke those words that Morley so often used to express the spirit of his own Liberalism:

"Truly these things do respect the souls of men and the spirits — which are the men. The mind is the man."

## V

The greatest book that Morley wrote after he entered political life (his *Walpole* in the Twelve English Statesmen Series is the plain straightforward account of that public-spirited but unheroic statesman) was of course the monumental *Life of Gladstone* (1903). Whether or not it is the greatest political biography in the English language, it has at any rate become, like its subject, an historic fact. Victorian biography in two or three fat volumes was laughed out of literary style by Lytton Strachey, al-

[13] "Mr. Morley's Cromwell," in *Contemporary Review*, December 1900; *Recollections*, II, 50, and Morley, *Oliver Cromwell*, Revised Edition (1904), Notes.

though it has come back in full vigor with Mr. Garvin's *Life of Chamberlain* and Mr. Churchill's *Marlborough*. Most of us probably agree with Mr. Guedalla that Gladstone and Disraeli, the two great duellists of Victorian politics, would live more vividly for us if Morley and Monypenny had each been able to paint a portrait in a single volume. Yet one critic still finds Morley's a fascinating book, and another, reviewing the latest life of Gladstone, says that even after all these years it is hard for a biographer to compete with John Morley. For Morley, with his intimate knowledge, his devotion that overleaped the deepest differences of attitude and belief, was the right biographer.

Morley has told of the laborious months at Hawarden spent, with the valiant help of Mr. Hirst, his future biographer, and William Stead, the son of his old assistant editor, among the huge mountains of some two or three hundred thousand papers — better for him and for his book had there been fewer. His problem, as he said, was architectonic, to find the right scale and proportion, "to overmaster and compress the raw material." On the whole he succeeded, although at times the chronicle of events almost submerges the mighty central figure. He treated a grand subject in the grand manner. What we most miss is the homely, familiar side of the statesman that his daughter and others have given us: the pictures of that august and godly household overflowing with gaiety and disorder, far more engaging than accounts of Midlothian speech-making or Hawarden tree-felling. Indeed the re-

cently published letters of Gladstone to his beloved and enchanting wife [14] make us know him better than all that he said or wrote for the public.

The theme that gives the unity of art to Morley's *Life* is the development of a Liberal. Gladstone's own words to Morley sum up that pilgrim's progress: "I was brought up to distrust and dislike liberty. I learned to believe in it. That is the key to all my changes." From the Toryism of his upbringing and his Oxford training he made himself, through his love of truth, his growing tolerance, the great liberator. No wonder that even that long life's journey could not bring him to the new Liberalism of a new age.

A few years ago one could hardly say a good word for Gladstone. Strachey had sketched him, inexplicable, absurd. Others reproached him, as much for his obvious righteousness as for his cloudy verbiage. But in today's perspective, his greatness overtops all that. We can see wherein he fell short: he could not understand the rising social forces as did Disraeli or Mill or Chamberlain. He was not, H. A. L. Fisher said, one of the forward-reaching minds. But the unity of his life, the great simplicity of his ends, his firm faith in honor among nations, his hatred of tyranny and cruelty — how mighty they stand out now against a Europe betrayed by the lies of dictators, ravaged by the incredible barbarity of total war! In Gladstone's lifetime he was the one statesman to whom oppressed peoples turned in hope. Today, says Mr. J. L. Hammond,

[14] *Gladstone to his Wife*, edited by A. Tilney Bassett (London, 1936).

"He is the only man of whom it can be said with confidence that if he had been alive during the last twenty years the world would have escaped some of its most terrible calamities." [15]

## VI

As the basis of the franchise was broadened by the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884–5, there arose a group of critics who followed Carlyle in their growing fear of popular government. They foresaw some of our dangers, but their creed of authority and distrust of the common man pointed toward the greater dangers that threaten to overwhelm us. Their criticism, as Professor Lippincott has said in his *Victorian Critics of Democracy*,[16] is more urgent now than when they wrote, for only at our peril can it be ignored. But the series of essays in which Morley answered them is just as timely a defence of democracy.

Morley's democratic faith that the workers, who are the people, must win political power to secure a better society, was part of his radical heritage. But he came to share Mill's sense of the power of the majority over the minority, the ignorance of the average voter; and he had little of Mill's confidence in the value of such political devices as proportional representation. He was learning too from hard experience the inner workings of campaigns and constituencies. In these essays written from

[15] Review in *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, June 3, 1938.

[16] B. E. Lippincott, *Victorian Critics of Democracy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1938).

1886 to 1905 Morley was facing the rise of forces which liberal democracy was not strong enough to meet or to shape: the demand of the Socialist and Labor movements for economic equality, the pressure of industrial and nationalist expansion in menacing forms of Imperialism and Militarism. Yet, although most of his *Fortnightly* comrades were becoming disillusioned about the democratic process, Morley, aristocrat by taste and temper as he was, won through by conviction and sympathy with his faith in democracy unshattered.

The book that Dr. Ernest Barker has called the finest exposition of conservative thought in the latter half of the nineteenth century was Fitzjames Stephen's *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. Although it dealt only incidentally with democracy, it was a forerunner of the anti-democratic reaction. And it stirred Morley to the writing of his own confession of faith.

Two brothers more unlike in temperament than Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen it would be hard to find. The contrast is perfectly hit by Charles Eliot Norton: Fitzjames, he wrote, is "burly and broad-shouldered in mind as in body," . . . almost brutally forceful and useful on the ground. "But off the pavement his powers fail. Leslie is a far better climber of mountains than he; with a lighter step, a steadier head, stronger wind, and a clearer vision." [17] Fitzjames had his father's force of mind, his mother's strength of character, with a stubborn grimness

[17] *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton* (Boston, 1913), I, 476.

of his own. Norton thought him the strongest-minded man he had ever met, vigorous, unimaginative, the most typical of the men to whom England owed her imperial greatness. Two of the stories that Leslie told in the life of his brother which he found so hard to write illustrate the strength and the grimness.[18] At Mr. Guest's school — the school that had too much theology and not enough bullying — Fitzjames, aged somewhere between seven and twelve, after hearing a tract on the four means of attaining holiness, set about meditating on hell, picturing himself at the core of a white-hot globe of iron. "It seemed to me then, as it seems now," he wrote long afterward, "that no stronger motive . . . can be applied to actuate any human creature toward any line of conduct. To compare the love of God or anything else is to my mind simply childish." One day when the boys were at Eton Fitzjames gave a terrific pounding to a big boy who had just been beating Leslie. The bullying at Eton taught him, he said, Hobbes's lesson that to be weak is to be wretched and that the state of nature is a state of war. That boy learned early the die-hard philosophy of *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.*

"A lawyer by nature," Fitzjames succeeded his friend Sir Henry Maine as legal member of the Council for India, wrote his chief work, *A History of the Criminal Law of England,* and eventually became Sir James Fitzjames and a judge. It was on the way home from India that he began the book that was both the result of his experience

[18] *Life of James Fitzjames Stephen,* pp. 73–4, 80.

of strong government ruling by force and the expression of his very character. For he was, as Leslie put it, "at once a Puritan and a Utilitarian." He had seized the sternest doctrines in the Calvinism of his fathers — the depravity of man, the power of fear, and had reinforced them with Hobbes's belief in the rule of the stronger and the necessity of force. Like his brother, Morley, and Harrison, he was steeped in Mill's *Logic*, but unlike them he refused to follow Mill as far as the *Liberty*. "I am falling foul," he wrote in a letter, "of John Mill in his modern and more humane mood — or rather, I should say, in his sentimental mood." And so he condemned the later Mill in the name of the earlier and of Bentham, the new Utilitarianism in the name of the old.

"The essence of life is force, and force is the negation of liberty." That is the theme of *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. Fitzjames attacked Mill's plea for a liberty of thought and action limited only by the welfare of society, as contrary not merely to expediency (the utilitarian test) but to morality itself. For government, morality, and religion are inseparable, and all three are based on force. Even Parliamentary government is simply a mild and disguised form of force: "We agree to try strength by counting heads instead of breaking heads, but the principle is exactly the same." Since liberty cannot improve the masses of bad and ignorant men, coercion is the only way. "What is all morality, and what are all existing religions . . . except an appeal either to hope or to fear, and to fear far more commonly and emphatically than to

hope?" The sanction of morality is not the love of humanity but the fear of punishment. Morality indeed depends on belief in God and a future state — a belief which cannot be proved. God must be an infinitely wise and powerful Legislator, not to be loved but to be feared. Christian love stops short at the gates of hell, and hell is an essential part of the Christian scheme. When reason has done all it can, Fitzjames concludes, these questions will remain: What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world? The book ends with the sombre, unforgettable picture which William James took for the close of "The Will to Believe":

"We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still, we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road, we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? 'Be strong and of a good courage.' Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. . . . If death ends all, we cannot meet death better."

Leslie naturally did not argue with his brother. He summed up the book very fairly in his *Life* and simply stated his dissent. But in other essays he is evidently giving his answer. The idea that men must still be kept in order by primitive threats of supernatural vengeance seems to me, he wrote in his "Darwinism and Divinity," at once unscientific and immoral.[19] To this son of the Stephens, free thought was not only a right but a duty.

[19] *Essays on Free-Thinking and Plain-Speaking* (London, 1873).

*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* was a challenge, not only to the young apostles of Humanity but to the older believers. For once the *Fortnightly* and the *Spectator* saw eye to eye. R. H. Hutton of the *Spectator* exposed Fitzjames's almost grotesque inconsistencies: "His system is Calvinistic, minus its foundations. It relies on the threat of damnation for its moral power, but declines to say whether that threat is true or false. . . . Mr. Stephen writes on the basis of a belief in a hypothetical creed, — a creed of pitiless necessitarianism garnished by threats and bribes . . . , which he wishes he held." [20]

In fact, this was almost literally true. Fitzjames, though he held to the necessity of some kind of religion, ceased in his later years to believe in historical Christianity. He even admitted in a letter that there was really little difference between himself and Harrison except the latter's more enthusiastic view of human nature.[21]

But oh, the difference to Harrison and Morley! Stephen's blows were aimed at their dearest beliefs. Mill, in those last weeks of his life, thought the attack not worth answering. But Morley saw the need, not so much of defending Mill as of exposing the "heathenism" of Stephen's Gospel according to Goliath. In the irresistible letters quoted by Mr. Hirst he urged Harrison on to the fray: [22]

"He [Stephen] is becoming insufferable, and ought to be gently stamped upon. You are the man to do it, be-

[20] *Criticisms on Contemporary Thought and Thinkers* (London, 1894), I, 126.

[21] *Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen*, p. 454.

[22] Hirst, I, 239, 241–2.

cause you have as firm a grasp of the matter as he has, and you can make him ridiculous in a different way from that in which he makes himself ridiculous."

Of course Harrison could not resist the chance to do battle for his cause. He was soon sending a few pages of his brilliant "Religion of Inhumanity" which delighted his editor:

"You swing off with great force and ease — and if you keep that up, you will make old Stephen's big ribs resound with thwacks — the monstrous Goliath that he is. . . . His book will confirm the worst parts of the English character — and, unless you slay him, the uncritical public will suppose that he has finally knocked the wind out of . . . Comte, Mill, you, and the whole band of us people who have a religion."

Both Morley and Harrison saw the truth in Stephen's argument for order and good government. But "we have to prove that we are . . . as firm for it, as Stephen is — and yet without bluster, swagger, bounce, brutality. . . ." The last thing the Englishman needed to be told was the value of coercion; there was only too much of it in his treatment of the workers and the Irish. Stephen's own demand for more coercion of Ireland showed the real "Bill Sikes" in him.

"The Religion of Inhumanity" [23] is Harrison at his uttermost. Its daring vigor and racy wit put it, along with his satire on Arnold, "Culture: a Dialogue," high up in the exhilarating literature of controversy. He labels

[23] *Fortnightly*, June 1873.

Stephen's grisly confession of faith, his unlovable God and probable hell, "Calvinism minus Christianity." "And when Mr. Stephen crushes up 'some wretched little curate,' we can almost hear the bones crack between his teeth. . . ." Stephen's great error is to identify physical with moral power. The arguments which he draws from his Indian experience are dangerous when applied to Western civilization. "The only person in the Gospel whom an Indian official must regard with interest and sympathy is . . . Pontius Pilate!"

When Harrison turns from smiting Goliath to expounding his own religion of Humanity, his manner changes from swift strokes to some of those swelling periods, "the tide of collective goodness and truth," etc., etc., that have given Victorian style its bad name. His rhetorical questions are very brilliant but very, very rhetorical. But the elegy for Mill with which he ends [24] is the deeply moved and moving companion-piece to Morley's own memorial essay.

In calmer mood Morley followed, pressing home the argument in his "Mr. Mill's Doctrine of Liberty." [25] Stephen assumes, he sums up the case, that men are improved only by coercion, that liberty is merely negative. But the liberty that Mill defended is active, positive. And persecution of thought is as futile as it is hateful, not only a crime but a blunder. In their assault on Goliath (who came back at them in his second edition) Morley and

[24] See *ante*, p. 49.
[25] *Fortnightly*, August 1873.

Harrison struck at the root of this gospel of die-hards: that men in many matters ought not to be free, that they are fundamentally unequal, and are not brothers at all.

Sir Henry Maine was a critic of democracy whom Liberals took seriously. His *Ancient Law*, published two years after the *Origin of Species*, was a landmark in its own field, the evolution of legal and social customs. It was from the German historical school that Maine had learned not only his historical method but his conservative premise, the slow growth of social institutions. Where Comte and Mill stressed men's power to change their conditions, Maine saw only the difficulty and danger of change. Besides, he was not only a scientific historian but, like Fitzjames Stephen, a lawyer and an Indian official: naturally he expected, and saw, the worst of democracy.

As Morley's essay, "Maine on Popular Government," insists,[26] Maine carried his criticism of democracy into an indictment of human nature itself. Because he was refuting the political theories of Rousseau and Bentham, he could not see that a far stronger influence on England was the actual and successful experience of democracy in America and the British colonies. Because he treated democracy solely as a form of government, he saw only the failures of its machinery and ignored its spirit of free discussion and consent. "You cannot isolate government, and judge it apart from the other and deeper forces of the time": in that sentence Morley sums up Maine's in-

[26] *Fortnightly*, February 1886; reprinted in *Studies in Literature*.

ability to understand the meaning of the democratic experiment.

But to answer Maine was not to dispose of the most challenging issues that he raised; he was foreshadowing later and grimmer attacks on democracy's defects. And some shadow of things to come falls across Morley's hope that popular government has the best chance of escaping a catastrophe "in the obscure and uncertain march before us."

That sense of possible catastrophe deepened in the next ten years. Morley's first essay on democracy was written not long before the Liberal defeat of 1886; his second, after the defeat of 1895, in which he lost his Newcastle seat. He knew that the Conservative victory had settled none of the questions that the Labor movement was raising; that the hardest problems were left "outstanding and inexorable." It was in this grave mood that he reviewed, in May, 1896, Lecky's *Democracy and Liberty*.[27]

Stephen had attacked the ethical basis, Maine the political workings, of democracy; Lecky was concerned chiefly with its economic effects on property rights. Distinguished historian though he was, Lecky could not treat the democratic movement objectively; his attitude perfectly illustrates Mill's remark that most men's convictions run hand in hand with their interests or their class feelings. Because he was first and last the Irish landowner, his book, as Professor Lippincott has shown, was an attack

[27] *Nineteenth Century*, May 1896; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. IV.

on democracy as a threat to the security of property, written in a mood of indignant protest and weary disillusionment.

With Lecky the disciple of Burke, the historian of rationalism and of the eighteenth century, Morley had much in common. But with Lecky the defender of the vested interests of Irish landlords he had no sympathy. In the most scathing criticism he ever wrote he riddled *Democracy and Liberty* with ironic shafts, for the unwieldy conglomeration of its form: "You might as well hunt for the leading principle of . . . an Omnibus Bill," and the bitter prejudice of its temper: "What is the use of a man being a thinker if he will not think?" And he thrust to the core of its narrow concern with the rights of property, its neglect of the needs of common men.

Lecky's book had little influence in its time; it is significant mainly as marking the end of an era, the protest of a conservatism that could only cling to the outgrown past. But if it saw no vision and gave no solution, it did raise questions — not only the stock questions about ignorant voters and the American spoils system, but the more searching questions of the rise of Socialism and Militarism. Perhaps the finest thing in Morley's essay is the candor with which he faces these inexorable questions. He saw the futility of Lecky's appeal to the sense of justice to support the old system of property rights, for it was the common people's sense of justice that was shaking privilege and monopoly to their foundations. He saw the gravest failures of Victorian democracy: its failure to meet

the needs of the workers, its failure to find the road to peace.

But in these sharp tests Morley's faith was stronger than his fears. In the *Recollections* he describes a visit in 1892 to Taine, who was, as usual, very despondent about France and democracy. Morley answered respectfully, "as well I might," that you cannot expect too much from men, but that when you have granted all the vices and shortcomings that any critic can find in parliamentary government, parliamentary government is still better for a Western society than the best despot. "If so," he adds, "what is the use, and what is the manliness, of shivering about democracy, like Taine, Scherer, Maine, Lecky?" Democracy, Morley saw, is better for men because it does express, however imperfectly, that respect for human personality without which, we now know, life itself is intolerable.

The third of these criticisms of democracy, L. T. Hobhouse's *Democracy and Reaction* (1904), was far more than a case of anti-democratic jitters. For the author of *Mind in Evolution* (1901) and *Morals in Evolution* (1906) could see democracy against the background of biology and the social sciences as well as history and politics. In its farseeing criticism this book ranks with J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902), a classic recently reissued. These two books are not, like those of Stephen and Maine and Lecky, the protest of authority and privilege; they are closer to Mill in their breadth of outlook, their grasp of realities. Written so soon after the South African War, they probed

very live issues of politics and ethics and spoke to the sobered mood of Kipling's "Recessional."

Even in this day and time *Democracy and Reaction* is stimulating reading. Has the democratic state itself, it asks, become an obstruction to progress? Does popular government necessarily entail a blunting of moral sensibility, a cheapening of national ideals? It is a modern version, with modern instances, of Mill's old warning that popular government tends to collective mediocrity. Hobhouse traces the rise of the new Imperialism of commercial gain, racial supremacy, and conquest that had swallowed up the older Liberal idea of Empire, and led to annexations, frontier wars, and the South African War itself. For prosperity had brought an easy scepticism and materialism — the passage almost repeats Morley's own diagnosis, written just a generation before, of the compromise of the seventies. But by 1904 the middle classes themselves, enriched by free competition, had become Imperialists. The war had proved that even a democracy can be warlike when political power is held by the interests that make for war; that democracy turns Jingo when it makes itself the master of others. "Democratic Imperialism," says Hobhouse, is a self-contradiction. The chief cause of reaction, then, the deepest danger to democracy, is the growing power of wealth, which was justifying its domination by the popular gospel of might makes right. For this danger self-government is no remedy: it is only an instrument, which can be wielded for social justice, or turned to base uses. We need a revaluation of the ends for which all civilized government exists.

For so searching an analysis, so close to his own thinking, Morley could have nothing but praise. His long review,[28] written in the spring of 1905 some months before the great Liberal victory that sent him to the India Office, is as soberly questioning as the book itself. "Reaction," he suggested, was hardly the name for a movement that was no ebb of thought but an expansion of empire and grasping of social and economic power. Then, after underlining Hobhouse's argument, Morley moved to the theme nearest to his own mind, the meaning of Liberalism. For what mattered most to Morley was not forms of government but the spirit behind them. And so what matters in these pages is not his sketch of the rise of European Liberalism — a kind of prelude to the brilliant study that Hobhouse himself was soon to write [29] — but the passages that define his own Liberal quality.

His first assertion, "Faith in Progress has been the mainspring of Liberalism," seems to cut a chasm between his day and ours. For Santayana was right when he wrote after 1918:

"The war will kill the belief in progress, and it was high time. Progress is often a fact. . . . But belief in progress, like belief in fate or in the number three, is a sheer superstition." [30]

Now *superstition* is the very word that Morley uses in this essay to describe the Liberals' blind faith in an *inevi-*

[28] *Nineteenth Century*, March, April 1905; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. IV.

[29] *Liberalism* (Home University Library, New York, 1911).

[30] "The Progress of Philosophy," in *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies* (New York, 1922), pp. 207–8.

*table* law of Progress — always with a capital P. For the idea of Progress, as Professor Bury has traced it in his classic study, had grown up with the eighteenth century's struggle for liberty into the high purpose of Turgot and Condorcet. In the mid-nineteenth century's orgy of machinery and prosperity Progress had bogged down into what Herbert Spencer called "a beneficent necessity." But Morley, from his first word on "New Ideas" to the "Notes on Politics and History" that was almost his last, had done battle with this Victorian complacency, this cosmic confidence. Over and over he had declared that Progress is no necessity or divinity. Only by men's constant thought and will and courage can liberty be won and held. Morley's sober faith was in part a heritage of a great European tradition. But it was also a forerunner of a greater hope: our hope for a world-wide resistance to tyranny, a world-wide winning of liberty.

The country where Socialism has been less talked about, and more practised, than any other — so Morley had described England as long before as his *Cobden*. And in the years of his efforts for the Radical and the Newcastle programmes, he must have asked himself how far Liberalism could go toward Socialism. Perhaps his clearest answer is given in this essay, in discussing Hobhouse's attempt — carried on in his *Liberalism* — to reconcile Liberalism and Socialism as two approaches to the problem of social justice. For Hobhouse, like John Dewey and the early Fabians, had become convinced that true Socialism is based on the political victories that Liberals have

won; that it completes, not destroys, Liberal ideals. Morley too had always rejected the "perverted" Liberalism of ruthless competition, the gospel of self-interest. He saw how much the state had done, and must do, through protective laws and social taxation, to secure a more equal chance for all. In devotion to social ends Morley's Liberalism was not far from the liberal Socialism that Hobhouse explored. But in Morley's refusal to submit the individual's freedom of choice to complete control by expert or official, he drew, as liberals after him have drawn, the dividing line.

Morley lived to see the Liberal Party shattered by the War of 1914, to see party names become, as he put it, mere empty bottles with bits of the old labels.[31] Nineteenth-century Liberalism had grown too assured; it had failed to humanize the industrial order out of which it grew. Its efforts to transform middle-class political democracy into a true social democracy had been first diverted, then checked, by forces too strong for it to master. For the needs of a new age this Liberalism was not enough. But through all its fortunes it had kept the faith that men are moved, not only by their economic needs, their will to power, but by their minds and spirits.

Of this great legacy of European Liberalism there is no better record than the memorable words of Morley's *Recollections:*

"Respect for the dignity and worth of the individual is its root. It stands for pursuit of social good against class

[31] Hirst, I, xxii.

interest or dynastic interest. It stands for the subjection to human judgment of all claims of external authority. . . ."

The dignity of the individual; the freedom of the mind; the search for the common good: that is the Liberalism of Morley. Not a political technique or a party programme; more than universal suffrage or civil liberties: it is a temper of mind, a way of life.

Not so long ago "the dignity of the individual" seemed just one of the shopworn platitudes of Commencement orators. Today this belief in the inviolable spirit of man, denied by the totalitarian states, has become the common cause of us all. "When the dignity of the human soul is denied in great parts of the world," Secretary Hull has warned, "no one of us can be sure that his country or even his own home is safe." That great artist Thomas Mann has echoed Morley's words in *The Coming Victory of Democracy,* his affirmation of faith in "that inalienable dignity of man which no force, however humiliating, can destroy." And Mr. André Philip has told us [32] of those Frenchmen inside France who kept on resisting without hope of victory because they "wanted to be faithful to the eternal values of our civilization," because they believed that liberty and human dignity are supreme realities — "that it was better to die than to deny this."

[32] *New York Times Magazine,* November 1, 1942.

# CHAPTER X

## ONE FIGHT MORE: THE WAR AGAINST MILITARISM

I DETEST war, but so do you all. I recognise, and so do you, that there may be occasions when the undertaking of war is a national duty which cannot with honour safely be refused. I have no natural gift, I am sorry to say, of turning my cheek to the smiter."

Some forty years ago Morley used these words in explaining his attitude to his constituents at Montrose.[1] Because he saw Militarism as "the point-blank opposite of Liberalism," the enemy of the free mind and the good society, he fought against it to his last public act, his resignation from the Cabinet in August, 1914. He had lived and worked for peace, but not for peace at the price of liberty.

From the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War Morley had begun to realize the threat to European democracy and peace of the rising tide of Nationalism. His post-war *Fortnightly* essay, "A Day at Sedan" (June, 1875), was both an epilogue and a prophecy. In the face of the dangers of French retaliation and Prussian Militarism, he foresaw that peace in Europe would have to be secured,

[1] Quoted by Syed Sirdar Ali Khan, *The Life of Lord Morley* (London, 1923), pp. 162–3.

"if it can be secured at all, by a league of pacific powers, not afraid to wage war against the aggressor." But for that league there was not yet, he knew, a foundation of moral unity.

For Morley and the *Fortnightly* Liberals, the shock of the Franco-Prussian War was soon followed by an even sharper awakening. Professor Langer's recent study of *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* [2] has shown how Germany's overwhelming victory, by destroying the continental balance of power, gave the first impulse to a new British Imperialism. It was Disraeli who caught the impulse and, in a speech at the Crystal Palace in 1872, sounded the new note of Empire prestige, "the commanding spirit of these islands." When he succeeded Gladstone as Prime Minister, that sense of Empire was quickly dramatized by his purchase of the Suez Canal shares and his Royal Titles Bill of 1876 — vainly opposed by Morley and the Radicals in Parliament — conferring on Victoria the title of Empress of India. And then, in the Turkish-Balkan crisis of 1875–78, he taught these startled Liberals the perils of Imperialist adventure.

While Gladstone roused the conscience of England with his great speeches and pamphlets on Bulgarian atrocities, while Disraeli's manoeuvres encouraged Turkey to resist reforms and provoke Russia, while mobs broke Gladstone's windows and shouted,

We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do
We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too,

[2] William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902* (New York, 1935).

Morley kept steadily on, calling for British coöperation with the Powers to compel reforms by Turkey, and resisting the rising clamor for intervention against Russia.[3] Those monthly editorials of his, with their firm, daring grasp of realities, are still worth rereading. His judgment of the issues has been notably confirmed by Professor Seton-Watson in his *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*. Disraeli, he says, failed to understand the new forces at work in the Balkans. After bringing England to the verge of war, he withdrew from his position and utterly abandoned Turkish integrity in Europe.[4]

For Morley, with the powerful aid of Leonard Courtney, James Bryce, and Goldwin Smith, was fighting Jingoism on all fronts, showing the workers and the middle class what Disraeli's policy of threats and bluster was doing to them. The danger of European war, he pointed out in his fine essay on Lancashire (July, 1878), was one of the causes of the depression from which they were suffering. And "the shameless wars for the extension of their markets" would do even more harm by provoking a disastrous economic contest of the cheap races with the dear ones.

In showing up the waste of war, the cost to industry and social reform, Morley was carrying on the campaign of Cobden and Bright. But when he wrote "A Political Epilogue" in September, 1878, after Disraeli's triumphant

[3] Hirst, II, 24–62.

[4] R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question* (New York, 1935).

return from the Congress of Berlin, he was beginning to look ahead, to see the danger behind the glory. A democracy, he warned, may be as violent, unjust, and imperious as a military dynasty. "It is time that people began to face what the new talk about great armies and a commanding position in European diplomacy really means." The first "Peace with Honor" was, he knew, empty and ominous.

The disastrous frontier wars in Afghanistan and South Africa, which helped bring Disraeli to his downfall, called Morley again into action. As an indictment of the ways of aggressive Imperialism, his "Plain Story of the Zulu War" (*Fortnightly*, March, April, 1879) can hardly be surpassed. He denounced the High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, not only for provoking a needless and therefore criminal war, but for "the rank hypocrisy" of his talk of England's mission as a great civilizing power. "When I come across such phrases in a blue-book, I shudder; they always precede a massacre." The way to civilize the Zulus is not by Gatling guns: "Patience, caution, moderation — but above all else patience — these are the key-words of a true policy if, in professing to civilise South Africa, you are not to rebarbarise England."

For an independent Radical journalist to attack the "Forward Policy" of Disraeli was one thing; for the Liberal member for Newcastle to criticize the foreign policy of Gladstone was quite another. The British occupation of Egypt was a sharp test for the courage of Morley's convictions.[5] Indeed the bright hopes of Gladstone's

[5] Hirst, II, 214–20.

second administration (1880–1885) were soon darkened by the bitter obstruction of Ireland and by the tragic entanglement in Egypt that led to Khartoum. The high beginnings of his foreign policy turned to disaster, and non-intervention ended in armed occupation. At first, like Chamberlain, Morley had acquiesced in the British expedition to suppress Arabi's revolt, but against the annexation of the Soudan he held out even through the demands for revenge that followed the news of Gordon's death. So when in February, 1885, Gladstone announced the policy of "smashing the Mahdi," Morley, taking his political life in his hands, moved an amendment regretting the Government's decision to overthrow the Mahdi. His speech argued that such a war would be a political blunder, an utter waste of national strength. On the Conservative vote of censure the Government won by a small majority, but Morley's protest was not in vain. The pressure of the Radicals and the possibility of war with Russia soon ended the policy of smashing the Mahdi.

From the defeat of Home Rule in 1886 there followed an appeal by the Unionists to a rising popular pride in the Empire. Rooted deeply in economic incentives at home and a growing sense of insecurity abroad, this new Imperialism, with Dilke, Seeley, and Froude for its apostles, Chamberlain for its stage-manager, and Kipling for its poet, flowered into romantic enthusiasm.[6] The already divided Liberals were now even more deeply torn; one powerful group followed Lord Rosebery and Forster

[6] Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism.*

into the camp of Liberal Imperialism. While many of the Liberals, as Hobhouse put it,[7] were becoming Imperialists in their sleep, to be wakened only by the shock of the South African War, Morley and Harcourt, who in 1898 resigned from the Liberal leadership in the Commons, stood almost alone. "The loneliness of a public man cleaving to principle when all others forsake him and flee," wrote the *New York Nation* in 1899, "does not frighten John Morley in the least."

Just before the Boer War broke out in the autumn of 1899, it fell to Morley to speak at Arbroath on September 5 and at Manchester on September 15 for the Liberal opposition. His own graphic story of the Manchester meeting is told in a letter quoted in the *Recollections:* [8] how the war-party had packed the huge hall with young Jingoes bent on breaking up the meeting; how for ten minutes they shouted him down till he made them hear his one wholly indisputable truth, "that I was a Lancashire man"; how "after an hour of a judicious mixture of moderation, breadth, good-temper, with a slight guarded Lancastrian undertone of defiance, which they rather liked than resented, I sat down amid universal enthusiasm"; and how his enemies went away wondering what had beaten them.

That speech was a triumph of Lancashire pluck that Lancashire could appreciate. But it was something more; its ending rang with a passion that has kept it alive:

[7] *Liberalism*, pp. 221–2.
[8] *Recollections*, II, 85–7.

"A war of the strongest government in the world . . . against this little republic will bring you no glory: it will be wrong. . . . It may add a new province to your empire; it will still be wrong."

Of those words Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick has said, "John Morley did not call himself a Christian. He called himself an agnostic. But he was standing nearer where Christ intended His church to stand than the church has often been." [9]

Through the three long years while the war dragged on to its exhausted ending, Morley, helping to hold the Liberal majority behind its fearless leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, stood firm against popular anger and war fever. Mr. Churchill has written of his courage, of the "fierce, moving phrases" of his indictment of this "insensate" war. "I did my best to fight the fight," said Morley simply.

II

It was the Imperialism of frontier wars and annexations, the greed of territory without regard for its cost in welfare or war, that Morley was fighting. But to the greatness of the imperial ideal, to the high qualities of many of the men who had made and served the Empire, he did full justice. Chamberlain's Imperialism and his own "Little Englandism" were, he once said, two different ways of loving one's country. We are as proud as the Imperialists, he had written, of the greatness of England

[9] "Beyond Modernism," from *The Christian Century*, Dec. 4, 1935.

"because it has been in the main the greatness of humanity and right." In his review of the book that helped create the new Imperialism, Professor J. R. Seeley's *The Expansion of England*,[10] Morley reiterated the Liberals' sense of kinship with the freedom-loving spirit and democratic institutions of the self-governing colonies. But against such artificial schemes of federation or customs union as Seeley and Forster and others proposed, Morley argued that only by leaving as much room as possible for the free growth of its members could the Empire be held together in peace or war. Actually it was Liberals like Morley rather than Imperialists like Seeley who looked toward the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Indeed, it may be that, as Chamberlain chose the Colonial Office in 1895 to show what the new Imperialism could do, Morley took the India Office ten years later to show what Liberalism could do. His letters to Lord Minto, the Viceroy, will live, Lytton Strachey thought, "as the exposition of a stateman's handling of the Liberal creed." [11] He knew that young India's demands for freedom had been fed by Milton and Burke, Macaulay and Mill.[12] It is true that in his dealings with his Council and with the Viceroy he was very much of an autocrat; and that he had to put down serious outbreaks of rioting and violence with drastic measures of repression. But he firmly withstood long imprisonments and extreme sen-

[10] *Macmillan's*, February 1884; reprinted in *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. III.

[11] "A Statesman: Lord Morley," in *Characters and Commentaries*.

[12] Morley, *Indian Speeches* (London, 1909), pp. 41, 66.

tences: "We must keep order, but *excess* of severity is not the path to order. On the contrary, it is the path to the bomb." And through it all he and Lord Minto were working steadily for conciliation and reform. "We have no choice but to persevere in the path of reform. We cannot get out of our own history." The results: The Indian Councils Act of 1909, making the provincial legislatures more representative of the different classes; the appointment of native members to the Secretary of State's Council and the Viceroy's Executive Council, look small beside the recent proposals for a new Indian Union rejected by Indian leaders. But the Morley-Minto reforms were a landmark on the long road toward the self-government that seemed to Morley so far away, and that is yet to be won, by agreement and by victory.

On Morley as Secretary for India, here is Sir Edward Grey's verdict as reported by Viscount Esher in 1908: "He thinks it was providential, J. M.'s going to the India Office — in his opinion, *the* most dangerous post. . . . None of them except J. M., with his unimpeachable record, could have governed India just now. . . ." [13]

Through Morley's pioneer's work for India there ran two strands, the Liberal idea of empire: "And what are we in India for? Surely in order to implant — slowly, prudently, judiciously — those ideas of justice, law, humanity, which are the foundations of our own civilisation"; and the yet greater ideal of understanding: "If we

[13] Esher, *Journals and Letters*, II, 346.

can show 'sympathy' as well as firm justice, all may go well. . . ."

III

Morley's long search for the roots of war, the motives behind militarism, fills much of his later writing. The very books in his library — books on War and Christianity, Patriotism and Imperialism — with their marked and annotated pages, show how he struggled with these issues. Why had democracy failed to secure peace? That was the challenge to his Liberal faith that he faced more and more fully in his last essays. In 1886 hardly anyone noticed Maine's warning that "Nationalism is full of the seeds of future civil convulsion." But by 1896, when Morley wrote "Lecky on Democracy," the increase in armaments was threatening enough. Never in the history of mankind, wrote Lecky, had such powerful explosive materials been accumulated in Europe; almost never had the issues of peace and war rested so largely on three or four men. And democracy had not checked the spread of universal military service. To this fateful question Morley could find no answer. We can only be sure, he ended, that the growth of militarism, the appeal to force, springs from causes, such as religious and scientific ideas, far deeper than democracy as a mere form of government.

Some of these causes had grown clearer in the nine years between "Lecky and Democracy" and "Democracy and Reaction," years of the first "boisterous intoxication" of the Boer War, the disillusionment of its ending. Mor-

ley's own experience had taught him the strength of the forces against him. He had seen the nationalism that was sweeping Europe turned by the industrial and financial pressures and the adventurous political policies of late nineteenth-century England into an aggressive Imperialism that had already borne its bitter fruit.

Hobhouse had exposed, Morley had realized, the economic causes of militarism. But economic causes, they both knew, were not all. Ideas and beliefs were also causes: the idea that struggle for existence was the basic law; the belief that Darwin had proved that might makes right. And so, in two of his finest chapters, Hobhouse refuted this dangerous pseudo-Darwinism that was justifying competitive ruthlessness. Carrying on the argument of his *Mind in Evolution*, and linking the cosmic and the ethical processes which Huxley had put asunder, Hobhouse showed that human progress depends not merely on the struggle for existence but on the development of mind. A clearer view of evolution, he declared, gives no sanction to the prevailing materialistic worship of force; it actually supports the reformers in their application of ethics to politics. And he went on to defend Gladstone's great principle that states, like individuals, should be ruled by moral law. At a time when historians like Maine were exalting the competitive system as based on "the beneficent private war which makes one man strive to climb on the shoulders of another and remain there through the law of survival of the fittest"; when a host of writers in Germany and England was using biology to glorify war,

Hobhouse was a voice crying in the wilderness of fallacy and cynicism. What Morley thought of this sinister gospel of force we can read in his "Machiavelli" and his "Politics and History." He saw clearly that Darwinism was being not only misunderstood but misused, distorted, as he wrote in the *Gladstone*, "to give brutality a more decent name."

IV

"The most stirring political pamphlet . . . for many a year," said the Tory Imperialist Frederick Greenwood of Morley's "Machiavelli." [14] Written as the Romanes Lecture for 1897 and delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, it was a scholarly and brilliant discourse, compact of close-knit discussion and historical and literary allusion — a lecture worthy of its stately occasion and its famous subject. But, as its hearers must have realized, its design was not just abstract or academic; it was, as the *Recollections* calls it, "A Tract before the Times": "If ever there was a moment, it was this, for considering a little whether a State is bound to use moral means only for upholding its life and its freedom; whether it is the ruling business to save the State whatever the cost to standing notions of right and wrong." [15]

Recent scholars have gone farther to explain Machiavelli by showing how the conditions, the deadly climate of Italy in the late Renaissance, the violence of civil strifes, the threat of foreign invasion, drove him to his trust in

[14] *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. IV.
[15] *Recollections*, II, 55–61.

the strong, cruel, unscrupulous Prince. What Morley's essay gives is a very just account of Machiavelli's doctrine of the supreme secular state with self-interest as its sole end and force as its chief means, and a very clear statement of the unending case for and against it. To the critics who reproached Morley for giving no firm answers to these challenging questions he replied that it was something to raise such questions while there was still a chance for sane thinking. But of course Morley's answers, though he does not argue or assert, are plain for him who wills to read. You cannot call his "Machiavelli," as does Algernon Cecil in his *Six Oxford Thinkers*, "the protest of an austere moralist against the logical effect of his own conclusions" unless you think that the gospel of might makes right is the logical effect of the faith that men move toward the life of reason and of freedom. For Morley, as for Gladstone, the state is capable of right and wrong; it is civilized just in so far as it deals justly and lawfully with its neighbors, as it leaves behind the unspeakable brutalities of war. For them the end does not justify the means. For them the moral forces that Machiavelli put aside are nothing less than the living forces by which society exists: "If Machiavelli had been at Jerusalem two thousand years ago, he might have found nobody of any importance in his eyes, save Pontius Pilate and the Roman legionaries." Morley believed in the validity of moral force, but he faced unblinded the present power of armed force. He did not share what he once described with strange foresight as "that old Liberal delusion that Great

Britain will never again be at war, and that if she is at war, invasion is impossible." [16]

The debate on international morality that Morley's lecture started reached as far as the Italian historian Villari and the New York *Nation*. At home, the undaunted Harrison fell upon Greenwood as a defender of Machiavellism. For Greenwood, arguing that a state may do in self-defence anything that a wild animal would do, declared that resort to war, the law of the beast, still ruled. The State is still below morality.[17] It is as if he had foreseen the day of the dictators who rule by terrors such as Machiavelli never dreamed.

Once more before the end of his public life Morley came back to that overshadowing theme, the State as Force. His election as Chancellor of the University of Manchester in 1908 had come, he said, as the dearest honor of his life; and his deep interest in the University and its women students gave them the Morley Library. The address that he made there in the summer of 1912, "On Politics and History," [18] gathers up some of the wisdom of a long backward look over ideas and events. Through the whole speech runs the note of change: change in the

[16] "Home and Foreign Affairs," *Fortnightly*, April 1876.

[17] Greenwood, "Machiavelli in Modern Politics," *Cosmopolis*, August 1897; Harrison, "The Modern Machiavelli," *Nineteenth Century*, September 1897; Greenwood, "The Law of the Beasts," *Nineteenth Century*, October 1897.

[18] *The Works of Lord Morley* (Macmillan, 1921), vol. IV; *Notes on Politics and History* (Macmillan, 1913).

principles by which men have lived; change in the very meanings of the words they use and misuse. The changes in Morley's own outlook are here; he knows now, as he did not once, the power of the non-rational, of instinct and emotion, in politics; the dangers of its exploitation. He realizes that desires go deeper than opinions. All the more, then, does it matter that students and teachers of the universities which "are meant for reason's refuge and its fortress" should use their reason; should stop taking words like "evolution" and "democracy" for things. And Nationality, once sentiment, then political idea, now dogma — where is it leading? And that challenge of Machiavelli and of Treitschke, the German Machiavelli, "the State is Force" — true, but not the whole truth. What sort of State? What sort of Force? What will Force do to opinion and law, the two great agencies of government? What, above all, will it cost? Again Morley is asking searching questions, and again his own answers are clear. "Sanguinary sophistries," he called the *Real-Politik* of Treitschke and Bernhardi — he would have known what to call *Mein Kampf*. Of all this glorification of war the end, he knew, must sometime be disaster. Indeed with the failure of Haldane's mission to Germany that year and the speeding-up of the naval race with Germany, British Liberalism had lost its last battle for European peace.

## V

The story of Morley's resignation with John Burns from the Cabinet in August, 1914, is told in his *Memo-*

*randum on Resignation*, the record that he shaped from his notes and that he left to be made public after his death.[19] Winston Churchill has called it "as living and true a presentment of the War crisis within the British Cabinet as has ever been, or probably will ever be, given." [20] The tremendous issues which it raises, of British diplomacy before the War and in those fateful days, of relations with Germany and obligations to France under the Entente, must be left to the historian. The anti-war group in the Cabinet, as Sir Edward Grey himself said,[21] did express the division in Parliament and in the country, the general desire for peace. Morley's concern for the fate of the Government and the Liberal Party, the effect of war on industry and on Irish Home Rule, seems remote indeed from the awful realities of August, 1914. But we know that he could have done no other than to "testify for convictions." It was not simply, as Edmund Gosse thought, as "a very, very old man in despair" that he made his great refusal. In those hours of wrestling with party loyalties and personal friendships, in the anguish of his reply to Asquith's appeal that shook him to the core, it was his lifetime spent in the ways of reason and peace that sent him to his decision. "For me at any rate — *the future being what it must inevitably be* — no choice was open."

So, following John Burns, leaving behind the other

[19] *Memorandum on Resignation* (London, 1928).

[20] From "John Morley," *Great Contemporaries*, by Winston Churchill, p. 84, courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

[21] Grey of Falloden, *Twenty-five Years* (New York, 1925), I, 323–4.

members of the peace group, Morley resigned: "never," says Mr. Churchill, "by word or sign to hinder old friends or add to the nation's burden. . . . The old world of culture and quality . . . of values and decorum, deserved its champions. It was doomed: but it did not lack its standard-bearer."

He lived long enough to see the shattering of much that he had worked for; mercifully not long enough to see the end of the peace that was no peace.

"I looked to the past in this short episode without self-reproach. . . . I looked to my brief future with steady self-control, meaning to imitate Michelangelo's figure of the Penseroso in my library — with a firm mind pondering stern things.

*Grato m'è 'l sonno, e più l'esser di sasso.*"

So ends the *Memorandum.*[22] So passed Morley's last years, filled with his *Recollections*, with his beloved books and friends. In his last chapter, "A Word of Epilogue," an autumn Sunday afternoon meditation on the Surrey hilltop with its twilight and church bells and remembrance, Morley looks back over that Victorian age of which he was the standard-bearer, the age of new truths and free minds, of growing tolerance and compassion. For two long generations of rationalism and Liberalism it had seemed as though men were on the way to mastery

[22] For comment on the *Memorandum*, see G. P. Gooch, *Recent Revelations of European Diplomacy* (London, 1930), pp. clxxxix–cxcii.

of the mighty powers of science and machinery that they had loosed. Yet here (1917) was a world of blood and tears.

But that sombre close was not Morley's last word. There was his letter to the Arbroath Liberal Association, written by an old man in his eighty-fifth year, in the last months of his life.[23] He had seen the breaking of nations and of parties, the breaking of promises by the world's rulers in 1914 which seemed to him the most savage irony in the history of civilization. Yet this is no word of dread or despair. He could still hope that the people would learn to use their new powers, that the nations would turn at long last to Cobden's vision of interdependence. He could recall the great words that run through all his writing: the sentence of Bacon's carved on the stone mantel of his library, "The nobler a soul is, the more objects of compassion it hath"; and his own version of Cromwell's saying, "What liberty and prosperity depend upon are the souls of men and the spirits — which are the men. The mind is the man." And, he added, "courage and clear sight."

John Morley's war against militarism is our war now: war for the freedoms without which life is not human, for the mind that is the man.

[23] Hirst, I, xxii–v.

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